



# 6,000

Zulu people killed during 1879's Battle of Ulundi, fought as Britain expanded its territory across southern Africa

➤ [Perspectives, page 74](#)

# 0

The number of women allowed on the floor of the London Stock Exchange before the rules were changed in 1973

➤ [Year in Pictures, page 36](#)



# 137

Years that Gaudí's masterpiece, the Sagrada Família, has been under construction. The church is due to be completed in 2026

➤ [Wonders of the World, page 110](#)

# 19 million

Colonial subjects of the United States as it entered the Second World War – a fact that has often subsequently been forgotten

➤ [America's hidden empire, page 26](#)

# 12.3



Drug overdoses per 100,000 people in the United States in 2010 – over three times more than in 1970

➤ [The war on drugs, page 80](#)

# 9,400

Number of alleyways that reputedly lace the old medina of Fès, one of the largest medieval walled cities in the Arab world

➤ [Global City, page 108](#)



# 20 million

Books estimated to have been printed by 1500, just half a century after the printing press was first used in Europe

➤ [The original digital revolution, page 46](#)

# 34

The number of gold-encrusted pages of a 1,200-year-old Bible seized from a suspected smuggling gang by police in Turkey

➤ [History headlines, page 14](#)



People estimated to have crossed the border from Spanish Republican territories into France during the winter of 1938–39 as Franco's forces advanced through Catalonia

➤ [The Spanish Civil War, page 56](#)

# 450,000

## BBC World Histories

ISSUE 15 APRIL / MAY 2019



# World Histories

## America's hidden empire

The United States' imperial ambitions – and how they shape today's world

### Should museums return their treasures?

From the Benin Bronzes to art looted by the Nazis, experts debate where global objects *really* belong

**“Historians *should* speak truth to those in charge”**

Rutger Bregman on the power of history

**Rorke's Drift:** The Zulu view

**FROM DAGGERS TO DRONES**

The rise of long-distance warfare

**The first digital revolution**

How Arabic numerals changed the world







**Hidden world**

The wreckage of a Second World War American tank lies part-submerged off the coast of Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Such US territories represent a side of American history – its imperial ambitions – now often overlooked. We explore why, and why it matters, on p26



## There are few more striking examples of history becoming political than the story of Rutger Bregman, the Dutch author at the centre of a media storm earlier this year.

His 2017 book *Utopia for Realists* explores how historical political ideas could rejuvenate today's divided world. As such, he might seem the perfect guest for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, which brings together politicians, business moguls and thought-leaders in an idyllic Swiss Alpine town.

Yet his contribution was not met with universal approval. The fallout made headlines around the world, led to a memorably testy exchange between Bregman and a US TV news anchor, and catapulted the idea of the 'public historian' back into the limelight. Bregman shares his take on the experience, and **his arguments for why more historians need to speak up**, on page 11.

Another example of the crossover between the historical and the political is the thorny issue of 'cultural repatriation': the debate about **whether museums and other institutions should return artefacts** to the places from which they were collected. It's a complex subject, sparking strong feelings on all sides, and you can read the thoughts of some leading experts in our Big Question feature from page 16.

It's telling how a lack of awareness of the quirks of history can have political repercussions in the present. As Daniel Immerwahr reveals on page 26, when a super typhoon hit US islands in the Pacific in 2018, it received just a fraction of the media coverage devoted to similar disasters in North America – because, he argues, of the ways in which such overseas territories have come to be regarded. Placing them back into their full context reveals **the history of the US as a history of empire** that is interesting both in its own right and for the reasons it has come to be forgotten.

If you're looking for diversions from the travails of the modern world, there are plenty to enjoy here. On page 46, Violet Moller travels to seventh-century India to follow the meandering journey of **the numerals that changed the world**. And, on page 66, curator Nina Wiedemeyer interprets some of **the master-**

**works of Bauhaus**, the influential art school founded a century ago this spring.

We'll be back on 23 May with a look at, among other things, the Stonewall Riots and D-Day. Until then, enjoy the issue.

**Matt Elton**

Editor, *BBC World Histories*  
matt.elton@immediate.co.uk



**BBC**  
**HiSTORY**  
MAGAZINE

Together with two regular titles, the *BBC History Magazine* team also produces a bi-weekly podcast, live events and a range of special editions exploring specific topics and periods



Available around the world, *BBC History Magazine* is published 13 times a year in print and many digital editions. Turn to page 88 for our latest subscription offer.



Launched in 2016, *BBC World Histories* complements *BBC History Magazine* and is published every two months.

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**  
➔ PAGE 24





The cast of Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet*, an avant-garde Bauhaus dance performance, photographed in 1927. This issue, we explore the art school's influence on a diverse range of form and media

## 16

### THE BIG QUESTION

#### Should museums return their treasures? ★

What should happen to global history's contested artefacts? Experts share their views

## 26

#### America's hidden empire ★

BY DANIEL IMMERWAHR

The forgotten history of the United States' imperial ambitions, and why they still matter

## 46

#### The first digital revolution ★

BY VIOLET MOLLER

Why the evolution of Hindu-Arabic numerals enabled breakthroughs in trade and science

## 56

#### The Spanish Civil War ★

BY PAUL PRESTON

How one commander's actions led to tragedy in the final days of this bloody conflict

## 66

#### Bauhaus: design icons

BY NINA WIEDEMAYER

As the art school marks a century since it was founded, an art historian showcases six examples of its influence and diversity

## 80

#### America's war on drugs: exporting the fight

BY BENJAMIN T SMITH

How President Nixon's declaration of war on drugs shaped anti-narcotics action around the world – and why its legacy is still felt today

## 89

### THE LONG READ

#### From daggers to drones ★

BY JAMES ROGERS

A history of the development of remote warfare – and a novel analysis of what it tells us about humanity

★ On the cover



COVER ILLUSTRATION BY DAVIDE BONAZZI

BAUHAUS-ARCHIV BERLIN



## THE BRIEFING

- 6 Viewpoints:** *Roel Sterckx* on the need to understand China's long history, *Kate Ravilious* on a recent ice age, and *Tim Mackintosh-Smith* on Arabian politics
- 11 The Interview:** *Rutger Bregman* on the importance of public history ★
- 14 History Headlines:** Discoveries and developments in the world of history

## CULTURE

- 96 Agenda:** The latest exhibitions and films

## JOURNEYS

- 100 In the footsteps of...** A Roman general's journey to Egypt *by Guy de la Bédoyère*
- 108 Global City:** Fès, Morocco *by Paul Bloomfield*
- 110 Wonders of the World:** Sagrada Família, Spain *by Paul Bloomfield*

## REGULARS

- 36 A Year in Pictures:** 1973 *by Richard Overy*
- 54 Extraordinary People:** Lata Brandisová *by Richard Askwith*
- 74 Perspectives:** The 1879 Anglo-Zulu War *by Ian Beckett* ★
- 114 Museum of the World:** A painting of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre *by Zareer Masani*

- 24 Subscribe** to *BBC World Histories* – enjoy the latest issue **FREE** with a 14-day trial digital subscription



**Free  
issue**

## Expert voices from the world of history



### Rutger Bregman

"I think history is one of the most subversive sciences: it shows us that things can be different – that there's nothing inevitable about the way things are right now," says the historian and writer. On **page 11** he discusses how he ruffled feathers at the World Economics Forum, and why historians should speak truth to power.



### Daniel Immerwahr

On **page 26**, the associate professor of history at Northwestern University, Illinois explores the United States' now largely forgotten imperial ambitions, which resulted in a scattering of overseas territories. "Some four million people live in them," he says, "four million people who can't vote in presidential elections."



### Tiffany Jenkins

Arguments rage about the 'return' of museum treasures such as the Elgin Marbles – but do such artefacts really belong to any particular time and place? As author and academic Tiffany Jenkins argues on **page 16**, "Culture doesn't have a fixed nationality. It's not like a person who needs a passport."



### Zareer Masani

In our Museum of the World feature on **page 114**, historian, author and broadcaster Zareer Masani examines a depiction of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre that took place in Amritsar in 1919. "This painting raises important questions about the massacre and its place in Indian politics," he says.



### Nina Wiedemeyer

On **page 66**, Nina Wiedemeyer – art historian and curator of a new centenary exhibition about the Bauhaus design school – introduces a sextet of its most influential pieces, some of which "were created as part of the school's system of dual apprenticeship: one part craftsmanship, one part artistic expression," she explains.

## CONTACT US (Full details on page 73)

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Email [bbcworldhistories@buysubscriptions.com](mailto:bbcworldhistories@buysubscriptions.com)

Phone UK: 03330 160 708 – Overseas: +44 1604 212832

**EDITORIAL** Email [worldhistories@historyextra.com](mailto:worldhistories@historyextra.com)

Phone +44 117 314 7377

Website [historyextra.com/worldhistories](http://historyextra.com/worldhistories)

Twitter [twitter.com/historyextra](https://twitter.com/historyextra)



# The Briefing

*The history behind today's news*

## View-points

*Expert opinions on historical issues that touch today's world*

### CHINESE THOUGHT

## Eastern intelligence

*As the global influence of Asia's largest superpower grows, so does the importance of understanding the history of Chinese thinking*

**BY ROEL STERCKX**

**D**uring a recent outreach visit at a secondary school in England, I showed a group of 15-year-olds a picture of the Gate of Heavenly Peace that leads to the entrance of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Above the portal of this gate, hangs one of the most widely circulated portrait images of Mao Zedong. Flanked by two placards saying 'Long Live the People's Republic of China' and 'Long Live the Great Unity of the World's People', the Great Helmsman stares serenely across Tiananmen Square.

I asked the students if they recognised the scene or the gentleman perching above the entrance. For some, the upturned roof eaves and red lanterns gave the game away. "It has an Asian feel to it," one observed, "perhaps somewhere in China or Japan". A handful among my audience spotted that it was

the Forbidden City – one had been there recently – but only three identified Mao by name and were able to add only a brief commentary in which the keyword was 'communism'.

This lacklustre response wasn't a surprise. East Asia hardly figures on British school curricula beyond its place in a narrative of imperial or Cold War history. The well-educated secondary school graduate in Britain might at best associate China with Opium Wars, revolution, communism, Hong Kong or the Great Wall, with a few making connections with the Terracotta Warriors and the Second World War.

While Brexit-supporting politicians enthuse about engagement with the rest of the world, and how the UK will cash in on trade deals with China or become a second Singapore, the generation charged with turning these ideas into reality is poorly served, being taught next

➔ **Have your say** Share your thoughts on this issue's columns by emailing us at [worldhistories@historyextra.com](mailto:worldhistories@historyextra.com)





## East Asia hardly figures on British school curricula beyond its place in a narrative of imperial or Cold War history

to nothing about the core social, political and philosophical values that have shaped China over centuries. The British media, meanwhile, links China with a limited set of memes: a rising, autocratic superpower, threatening the west via trade wars and industrial espionage.

Although politicians and educators increasingly recognise the value of teaching the Chinese language, few realise that we may all benefit from studying China beyond its very recent past and outside the framework of Sino-Western contacts. We have started to speak Chinese but fail as yet to *think* Chinese.

Taking a *longue durée* view of Chinese history, one could argue that the ideologues of China's 20th and 21st centuries have had a relatively minor role in shaping the world view and cultural DNA of Chinese society today. Some of its foundational ideas about power, leadership and loyalty were conceived during the classical age, in the teachings of masters of philosophy, some of whom lived 25 centuries before the foundation of the People's Republic in 1949. The need for a strong work ethic, the importance of family, respect for authority, parents and seniors – these are the legacy of Confucius (551–479 BC) and his followers.

Such ancient texts inform not just how people live their lives, but also the approaches taken by those in power. The Chinese obsession with education as a way to improve self and society, for instance, is ingrained with quasi-biblical authority in classical texts that were required reading for any official wishing to pass the civil-service examinations until the early 20th century.

Ancient China's masters of philosophy and their texts are quoted and invoked in public discourse in China just as Shakespeare or Machiavelli have been turned into adjectives in the English language. The ideal of the 'harmonious society', in which unity and cohesion prevail over individual ambition, was not invented by today's Chinese politicians who often trumpet it – nor was the conviction that society is best led by one monarch or leader, or the notion that the state is an extension of the family ruled by an unyielding father of the people. Confucius already acknowledged that it is better to manage than suppress the human desire for wealth, which sounds suspiciously like a plea for condoning capitalism in a socialist society.

Today, as China modernises and turns over its soil for roads and housing

developments, archaeologists uncover bamboo-slip manuscripts that have lain hidden from view for over 2,000 years. Legal documents from the time of the first emperor, Qin Shi Huang (who ruled in the late third century BC) reveal an institutional environment in which the state already micromanaged the private sphere of people's lives in considerable detail.

Scale aside, such practices seem ominously similar to the gathering of big data by government, or to the monitoring of citizens' digital imprints. Both are hardly unique to China: just substitute government with Facebook or Google and swap 'citizen' with 'consumer'.

I cannot fault those bright teenagers for failing to identify Mao; after all, some might be equally perplexed by a portrait of Oliver Cromwell or Margaret Thatcher. But if our engagement with China is to be anything beyond an expedient, short-term economic romance, we all might benefit from introducing the next generation to the basic outlines of Chinese thinking alongside the Greeks and the Romans. 🌐



### Roel Sterckx

is Needham Professor of Chinese at Cambridge University and the author of *Chinese Thought: From Confucius to Cook Ding* (Pelican, 2019)





## CLIMATE CHANGE

# Post-Columbian chill

*European colonisation of the Americas sparked a global climate-change incident with important lessons for today*

BY KATE RAVILIOUS

**T**he arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492 had huge and irreversible consequences. History is full of 'what if' moments, but the navigator's first sight of the Bahamas was perhaps one of the most significant turning points. Yet one impact of his 'discovery' that hasn't been explored before was a prolonged period of global cooling in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Though not a true ice age, the so-called Little Ice Age was a significant chill that began in the northern hemisphere by around 1400 and turned global in roughly 1600, gripping the world for more than a century and suppressing average temperatures by around 0.5°C. In the Swiss Alps, farms and villages were swallowed by swelling glaciers. Further afield, the Little Ice Age is associated with the droughts and famines that led to the fall of the Ming Dynasty in China, and brutal winters for the early European settlers arriving in North America.

Scientists have long debated the cause of the Little Ice Age. A spate of large volcanic eruptions, low solar activity and altered ocean currents have all been blamed. But researchers have always struggled to explain adequately how these effects, individually or combined, produced the deep global chill of the 1600s.

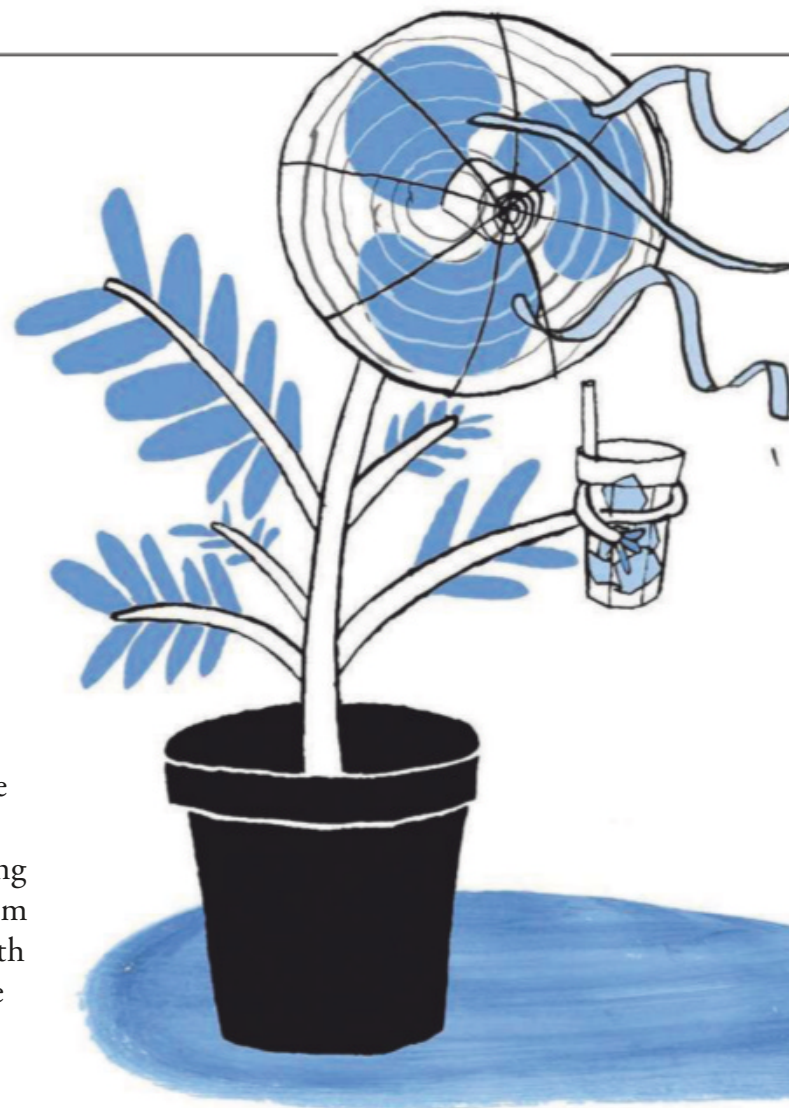
One additional possible cause, which has been hard to analyse accurately, was the sudden crash in the populations of indigenous peoples caused by the

diseases – measles, smallpox, influenza and the bubonic plague – carried to the Americas by Europeans. This mass dying would have resulted in fields being left untended, allowing forests to reclaim the land – a sudden burst of plant growth that would have sucked carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and could have sent global temperatures falling.

The long-unknown factor, though, has been the extent of this population crash. Unlike in Europe and China, there are no records to determine the size of indigenous American populations prior to 1492. Early accounts by European colonists are likely to have overestimated indigenous populations as a way of bragging about the riches of the newly discovered lands. Later estimates based on tax payments were made only after disease had ravaged the Americas, and thus almost certainly significantly underestimated the numbers.

To get around this problem, Alexander Koch and colleagues at University College London (UCL) carried out an

**This mass dying would have allowed forests to reclaim the land – which may have sent temperatures falling**



exhaustive literature review, using all available data to produce a more robust estimate. Their findings suggest that around 60 million people inhabited the Americas before Columbus arrived. By 1600, the indigenous population had dropped to just over six million people – a fall of 90%.

By estimating the area of agricultural land required to sustain one person, Koch and his colleagues calculated that around 62 million hectares (10% of the land area of the Americas) was probably being farmed prior to Columbus's arrival. Following the population crash, much of that land would have reverted to forest, causing a rapid draw-down of atmospheric carbon dioxide. The new data, published in *Quaternary Science Reviews*, explains the sudden drop in atmospheric carbon dioxide around 1610 revealed by samples from Antarctic ice cores, and matches the results of studies suggesting that most of that carbon was absorbed by terrestrial processes rather than oceans.

This is the earliest clear example of anthropogenic climate change, and it



➔ **Have your say** Share your thoughts on this issue's columns by emailing us at [worldhistories@historyextra.com](mailto:worldhistories@historyextra.com)

demonstrates the immense impact that a change in land use can have. But it also provides a salutary warning of the dangers of deforestation and the potential results of tree planting in affecting climate change. Already, the increased human-driven carbon dioxide emissions have warmed the world by 1°C, and a recent Met Office study suggests that the world is in the middle of what is likely to be the warmest ten years since records began.

The UCL study indicates that the 16th-century American reforestation event – equivalent to planting trees covering an area the size of modern France – reduced atmospheric carbon dioxide by around five parts per million; that would offset only about three years' worth of fossil fuel emissions at today's rates.

And we are running out of places to plant trees. Dave Reay, a climate-change scientist at Edinburgh University, has shown that planting trees in the wrong places can have the opposite effect to that intended, actually releasing carbon from the soil – and warns there is no 'silver bullet' for tackling climate change.

Unlike Columbus, we are aware of the impact of our actions, and if we act

fast we can still alter our course. History will judge us harshly if we don't. 🌍



**Kate Ravilious**  
is an independent  
science journalist

## ARAB POLITICS

# The caliph's dream

*Leadership in the Arab world, once based on the good of a community of citizens, has become dominated by authoritarian autocrats*

BY **TIM MACKINTOSH-SMITH**

**L**ooking around the Arab world today, one might well despair about its political future. With few exceptions, it's ruled by ruthless men – autocrats who brook no dissent. It seems that they alone can keep things together, and only by brute force.

In the autocrats' world, there is no debate. Free speech is punished with what has been called, since pre-Islamic times, 'the cutting of the tongue'. Historically, the cutting was usually metaphorical; today it can be more literal, and far more drastic – think bonesaws.

Political language seems to support the autocrats. Look in an English–Arabic dictionary and you'll find 'politics' translated as *siyasah*. Find

*siyasah* in an Arabic dictionary, though, and the first meaning given is "the breaking in of horses, camels" – as if politics begins with the use of the whip, the lunge and the muzzle.

*Siyasah*, the instilling of obedience, seems a long way from 'politics', the business of living together in the *polis*, the city-state. It seems to promise little respect for 'civil' society – for belonging to the *civitas*, the community of citizens. Yet Arab politics hasn't always been a matter of whipping unruly subjects and cutting dissident tongues.

The Qur'an portrays the ancient queen of Saba, biblical Sheba, as governing through a consultative assembly. Inscriptions show that, in the first millennium BC, Saba and other south Arabian states were commonwealths of semi-autonomous settled groups. Civil cooperation produced extraordinary works of hydraulic engineering – great dams, tunnels cut through mountains – and flourishing agricultural economies. Nomadic Arabs, meanwhile, were led by chiefs who were first among equals, not autocrats.

In the early seventh century AD, Muhammad's Medina – his *Madinah*, his *polis* – guaranteed, in its earliest, most inclusive constitution, the participation not only of the people who were beginning to call themselves Muslims but also of Jews and polytheists.

Another two centuries on, the Arab-Islamic empire at its ninth-century height was heir not just to Muhammad's *Madinah* and the societies of ancient

**Common good can be found only if Arab aristocrats loosen the muzzle – if they stop cutting tongues and, instead, allow people to voice their own dreams**





south Arabia, but also to Greek and Hellenistic civilisation – a civilisation that, in turn, drew inspiration from Plato’s ideal city and Aristotle’s *Politics*. The Arab empire was a polity without borders – geographical, temporal or intellectual.

For its writers, politics was tempered by civility: the *siyasah madaniyyah* of the philosopher al-Farabi, for example, meant *civil* governance. And for its rulers, such governance could be based – at least in theory – on more than just brute force, as a tale attributed to an early caliph illustrates.

One night, the early ninth-century caliph al-Ma’mun dreamed that a man was sitting on his throne. “It was as if I were standing before him,” al-Ma’mun said, “and filled with awe by him. I asked him who he was, and he said, ‘I am Aristotle.’ I was overjoyed, and said, ‘Great sage, may I ask you a question?’ ‘Yes,’ he said. So I asked him: ‘What is goodness?’ He replied, ‘That which reason deems good.’ And I said, ‘And then what?’ He replied, ‘That which the law deems good.’ And I said, ‘And then what?’ He replied, ‘That which the mass of the people deem

good.’ And I said, ‘And then what?’ And he replied, ‘And then there is no more *then*.’”

The caliph’s dream might itself have been dreamed up. In any case, it soon evaporated: the empire fell apart and rulers began to use pressure, not gravity, to hold it together. Reason, law, the people – all were forgotten. *Siyasah* lost its civility, and the term gained harsher senses; it even came to mean, in some contexts, “the use of torture and capital punishment”.

The politics of punishment is still with us. And yet the caliph’s dream, too, still seems worth dreaming, never more than now, and nowhere more than in the most populous and fissile parts of the defunct Arab empire – places such as Yemen, Syria and Egypt. But can there ever be such a thing as a truly common good when the mass of the people in these places is so fractured, where wars alone are ‘civil’?

If there is, it can be found only if the autocrats loosen the muzzle and let out the lunge – if they stop cutting tongues and, instead, allow the people, within the bounds of reason and of reasonable law, to voice their own dreams.

And – more important – if the people can find a voice. After the double defeat of the Arabs by Israel in 1948 and 1967, the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani berated Arab autocrats:

*“O my master, O my master the sultan:  
You have lost the war twice,  
Because half our people have no  
tongue...”*

That ‘half’ now looks like a rank underestimate. Far fewer found their voices in the so-called Arab Spring of 2011; those who did have now largely been silenced. It may take centuries more for the hundreds of millions of others to feel truly able to speak out – if they ever do.

For the time being, reason, law and the people remain in oblivion, while the rulers sleep their dreamless sleep. 🌐



**Tim Mackintosh-Smith** is a writer and lecturer. His latest book is *Arabs: A 3,000 Year History of Peoples, Tribes and Empires* (Yale University Press, 2019)



## The Interview



Historian and author **Rutger Bregman** made headlines

earlier this year when a speech he gave at a World Economic Forum meeting went viral. He spoke to Matt Elton about the experience, and why historians must speak out on current affairs

**Rutger Bregman** is the author of *Utopia for Realists: And How We Can Get There* (Bloomsbury, 2017). Listen to a longer version of this interview on our podcast online at [historyextra.com/podcasts](http://historyextra.com/podcasts)

### PUBLIC HISTORY

# The historical is political

**Talk me through how you went from writing your book, 2017's *Utopia for Realists*, to appearing at the Davos conference that gained so much media attention.**

**Rutger Bregman:** Yeah, that's a good question, and I've sometimes wondered that myself! My book is about all sorts of ideas that may seem bizarre right now but may become reality in the future – just as we have a lot of ideas that are very normal right now but were completely bizarre just a couple of decades or a century or so ago.

Think about the abolition of slavery, for instance, or equal rights for men and women: the first people arguing for these kind of things were dismissed as radicals and idiots with completely unrealistic ideas, but now we take them for granted.

The most famous of those ideas right now is universal basic income, which was almost completely forgotten five or six years ago. I wrote about its history, and about the bizarre history of how [US president] Richard Nixon, nearly managed to implement a small basic income [in the late 1960s]. It's an almost completely forgotten episode in American history.

The effect was that people started thinking, "Hey, maybe we could actually do this. Maybe it would actually work, because it almost happened in the past." It's an example of the way in which history can be far more convincing than thousands of pages of

economic models, because it shows us what would really happen in practice.

Universal basic income became a very popular subject among people in Silicon Valley and the tech community, and with CEOs around the globe. So I got an invitation to talk about the idea in [the Swiss town of] Davos, where the World Economic Forum is held every year. This is the place where the richest people, the elites, come together: they fly there in their private jets to talk about gender equality, climate change, that kind of thing.

The first impression you get is that you're at some kind of progressive conference. But then, after a while, you start noticing that there are certain subjects that aren't really being talked about – and I think the most important one is taxes. It's really the forbidden word – the 'T word', if you like.

Taking a historical perspective on this subject is fascinating. There's a

**“History can be far more convincing than thousands of pages of economic models, because it shows us what would really happen in practice”**







debate going on at the moment about whether top marginal tax rates should increase, and lots of people are arguing that a 70% top marginal tax rate for the very rich would be crazy – that it would destroy our economies. But historians can point out that, actually, we did this in the 1950s and the 60s: under [Republican president] Dwight D Eisenhower, the United States had a top marginal tax rate of 90%.

I pointed that out at the Davos conference, and said that I felt like I was at a firefighters' conference where no one is allowed to talk about water. It all felt very obvious to me – but I guess that's what made it a powerful thing. People don't really say the obvious things at conferences like these.

So that went viral, and then I got invitations to talk to a lot of different media organisations from all over the globe. I've been listening to myself for weeks and weeks – it's getting really boring, actually. But it has meant that whole subject of taxes has been on the front pages of big, major newspapers around the world, which is exactly where it needs to be.

**“History has a role to play in politics. It's one of the most subversive sciences, because it shows us that things can be different”**

**That's a remarkable thing for anyone to experience. What has it felt like, as a historian, to be at the centre of this massive media storm?**

I've got mixed feelings about it. I guess a lot of authors must experience a similar thing: the more success you have with your ideas, the less you learn, because you keep talking about the same things.

But the good thing is that I really think history has a role to play in the public domain and in politics. I think history is one of the most subversive sciences: it shows us that things can be different, that there's nothing set in stone about the way things are right now, that we can radically restructure society and economy. So I think that historians *should* speak truth to power.

A major part of historians' jobs is often to spend years and years in the archives, doing research into very small, specialist subjects. But we also have a lot to say about what's going on



---

**“When I turned on the TV, the only people I saw explaining the state of the world were economists – and historians have so much to teach”**

---

right now, and we should go out there and teach those lessons.

**Do you think that the current relationship between historians, politicians and the media is a healthy one?**

I'm more interested in the role that historians want to play themselves. You can always point at the media and say, "They're too sensationalist, they're not interested in what we're doing," and so on. But I think it's better to think about what you can do yourself, and to be more effective in conveying your message or in telling a story that people actually want to hear.

A few years ago, when I was trying to decide whether I wanted to do a PhD, I looked at all the PhDs that had recently been published by fellow historians at my university. To be honest, I thought they were really, really boring. With the 2008 financial crash and the Arab Spring both going on, it seemed to me as if the world was burning, and that there was so much to say – and there I was reading these PhD theses about farmers in the Netherlands between 1249 to 1252, but not 1253, because that was a very different story. It felt very irrelevant.

It was a similar story when I turned on the television: the only people I saw explaining the state of the world, these big complex events such as the Arab Spring, were economists. Historians have studied revolutions and financial

crashes, so there's so much we can teach, but there are just way too few historians going out there and doing that.

I taught history at university for a while, and sometimes a student would come up to me and say, "I want to write about this or that". I would ask them why, and every so often I would get the answer: "Because it has never been done before". And I always thought: that is the worst possible answer, because if no one has done it before, it probably isn't interesting. Sometimes I think that historians are like that: they just want to do something that no one has done before. There's probably a good reason for that, and I think historians need to think about what their perspective could add to what's going on now.

**Do you think that there are any dangers associated with historians getting involved in politics? Would you have a problem if, for instance, there was a historian that started putting forward views you found politically challenging?**

In my perfect world, there would be a lot of historians and they would play different roles. Not every historian needs to have a political or public role, either, although there is plenty of room for more of them in the public domain.

Take a historian such as Niall Ferguson: I disagreed with almost everything in his [1998 book on the First World War] *The Pity of War*, for

instance, but it really made me think, which is always good. Sometimes it's good for historians to get out of their ivory tower and get rid of the whole pretence of being objective and knowing it all, and to just let people ask the right questions so we can have a proper debate about these issues.

**This story is so extraordinary because of the way in which your speech at Davos put history right into the headlines. Are there any other methods that media historians could use to help people understand history in new ways?**

My simple answer would be that I still believe in books. Take Yuval Noah Harari's wonderful, hugely popular *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, for instance: it's so wonderfully written and makes you ask the big questions.

I would recommend that any jealous professional or academic historians read that book and ask themselves what makes it so attractive and why people find it so interesting. [I'd argue that] it's because, when it comes down to it, historians are storytellers, and stories have this extraordinary power to change people's perceptions. Having a better grasp of history opens your mind and widens your world view: it makes you see that there are so many different possibilities out there. I want to sketch different scenarios and show people that nothing is inevitable. 🌐



# History Headlines

## 2 LONDON UNITED KINGDOM

### Curating controversy

The director of the British Museum has caused controversy by describing the removal of the Parthenon marbles (pictured below) from Greece in the 19th century as a “creative act”. Speaking to the Greek newspaper *Ta Nea*, Hartwig Fischer stated that, despite requests to reopen negotiations, the 2,500-year-old sculptures will not be sent back to Greece. A British Museum statement said: “We believe there is a great public benefit in being able to see these wonderful objects in the context of a world collection.” Read more on the debate about returning artefacts in our feature on page 16.



## 3 POMPEII ITALY

### Mirror image

A brightly coloured mural of the mythical figure Narcissus admiring his own image has been uncovered at Pompeii. The artwork was preserved by the volcanic explosion of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79, and discovered in the atrium of an ornately decorated high-status Roman villa together with other murals depicting ancient mythological characters.



A mural of Narcissus gazing at his own reflection in a pool of water, recently excavated in the atrium of a Pompeii home

## 1 NEW YORK CITY UNITED STATES

### All that glitters

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has confirmed that it will return an ancient gilded coffin to Egypt, after investigations revealed that it had been looted from that country in 2011. Made in the first century BC for the high-ranking priest Nedjemankh, the coffin was acquired by the Met in 2017 for almost \$4 million. A spokesperson revealed that the museum had been provided with forged provenance documents stating that the coffin was exported legitimately in 1971.



The golden coffin of Nedjemankh was the centrepiece of a major Met exhibition, but has now been identified as looted

## 4 DIYARBAKIR PROVINCE TURKEY

### Scripture smugglers

Turkish police have recovered a rare medieval bible from a suspected criminal gang who were apprehended while trying to sell the artefact. Decorated with gold-leaf religious symbols, the 1,200-year-old manuscript is thought to have been smuggled across the border from Syria. Six arrests have been made.



A 1,200-year-old, 34-page leather bible, recently seized by Turkish police. It is believed to have been smuggled across the border from Syria

GETTY IMAGES/EPA/REAMSTIME/METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



## 5 JORDAN

### Man's best friend

A new discovery in Jordan suggests that dogs may have helped humans to hunt up to 11,500 years ago. Animal bones found at the Shubayqa 6 Neolithic settlement site show evidence of digestion by a carnivore, but are too big to have been eaten by humans. Archaeologists surmise from this, and other related evidence at the site, that the Stone Age settlement's hunters had developed a symbiotic hunting relationship with dogs.



Gazelle bones found at the Shubayqa 6 Neolithic site in Jordan exhibit signs of having passed through the digestive tract of a carnivore

## 6 AUSTRALIA

### Decolonised dictionary

The Australian Dictionary of Biography is being given a multimillion-dollar overhaul to 'decolonise' its entries. The project aims to re-examine the accuracy of existing profiles, and to add new entries on figures who have previously been overlooked – most notably women and Indigenous people. The ambitious project includes plans to add profiles of 1,500 female figures, to boost the 12% of entries currently devoted to women.

## 7 SOLOMON ISLANDS

### Wartime wreck

The wreck of the first Japanese warship sunk during the Second World War has been discovered off the coast of the Solomon Islands. Found at a depth of 1,000 metres, the Imperial Japanese Navy battleship *Hiei* sank in November 1942 after clashes with US forces during the first naval battle of Guadalcanal. A large rupture in the wreck's hull suggests that it may have been sunk by a large explosion in its magazine after being shelled.



Japanese warship *Hiei* in the First World War. It sank in 1942, killing 188 crew. The ship's wreck has recently been discovered off Guadalcanal

GETTY IMAGES/UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN







# Should museums return their treasures?

Amid calls for the 'return' of artefacts such as the Benin Bronzes and art looted by the Nazis during the Second World War, now held in museums far from their places of origin, nine experts discuss the ethical and historical aspects of the 'restitution' of such treasures

**Tiffany Jenkins**

**“The best way to respect people who came before us is to research history without judging it through the eyes of the present”**



In the early eighth century, monks at Wearmouth-Jarrow Abbey produced three enormous bibles. Two remained in Northumbria, but only fragments of one survive. The third travelled with the abbot as he set out to Rome, intending to present it as a gift to the shrine of Peter the Apostle. Known as the Codex Amiatinus, it is in astonishing condi-

tion – and is the oldest surviving complete Latin Bible in the world. This monumental text, one of the greatest works of Anglo-Saxon England, is now kept in the Laurentian Library in Florence, beyond Britain’s borders – and a good thing, too. Culture doesn’t have a fixed nationality. It’s not like a person who needs a passport. Though a product of particular time and place, as they move to new locations such artefacts spread knowledge about their origins, the different lives they have touched and meanings they have held.

It’s true that some artefacts were taken in circumstances we now find unpalatable. But history is long and complicated; the situation is always more tangled than ‘baddies’ versus ‘goodies’.

Consider the Parthenon of ancient Athens. Many elements were removed from that monument in modern times, and some (known as the Elgin Marbles) are now displayed in the British Museum, others in Paris and Copenhagen; activists would have them returned to Greece. Yet the Parthenon itself was a display of power, built mostly by slaves. Likewise, though the way British acquired the Benin Bronzes is ugly, the story of their creation, seen through the eyes of the present, isn’t without taint. The glory of Benin was built on the slave trade: the contested Bronzes in European museums were crafted from manillas (metal bracelets used as currency in west Africa) brought by the Portuguese to trade for slaves. It is not possible to repair that past. Nor will judging it through the eyes of the present aid an understanding of ancient Athens or the court of Benin. The best way to respect the lives of the people who came before us is to research and understand history without such an agenda.

We should aim to live in a world where artefacts from other times and places are shared. We should aim to unlock the past, not overturn it. That is what museums are for, and what they do best. That is why they should keep their treasures.

**Tiffany Jenkins** is the author of *Keeping Their Marbles* (OUP, 2016)

**Lissant Bolton**

**“Objects help relationships between museums and communities worldwide to be created and sustained”**



Museums should be (and are being) more transparent about collecting histories. However, discussions about where objects should be situated tend to skirt over the complexity of shared histories and to ignore long-standing effective relationships between curators and heritage professionals working in partnership with museums and communities internationally.

The British Museum is constantly engaged in collaborations with communities who want to document, revive and restore their distinct cultural heritage. Objects provide a point of connection and opportunity that enable those relationships to be created and sustained over time. Those relationships are often also personal: they are not only about connections between institutions but also about connections between curators and community members at different levels. In my own case I have worked for more than 30 years with, and at the invitation of, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in the South Pacific, supporting the work of women who want to sustain and develop their cultural knowledge and practice.

Some of our most important recent collaborations have developed around our collections from the African continent. For many years our staff have worked with a number of African museums, focusing on exhibition and research collaboration, collection care, infrastructure development and capacity building.

As part of this collaboration, last year our director, Hartwig Fischer, visited both Ghana and Nigeria to meet and support our colleagues there. In particular, he visited Benin City, the centre of the historic Benin empire that is strongly represented in the British Museum collections. During this visit, the Oba [ruler] of Benin talked about the value of having historic collections both in Benin City and across the world to act as ‘cultural ambassadors’ of Benin culture; he also expressed his desire to have some of those collections returned to Benin City (on loan and permanent return).

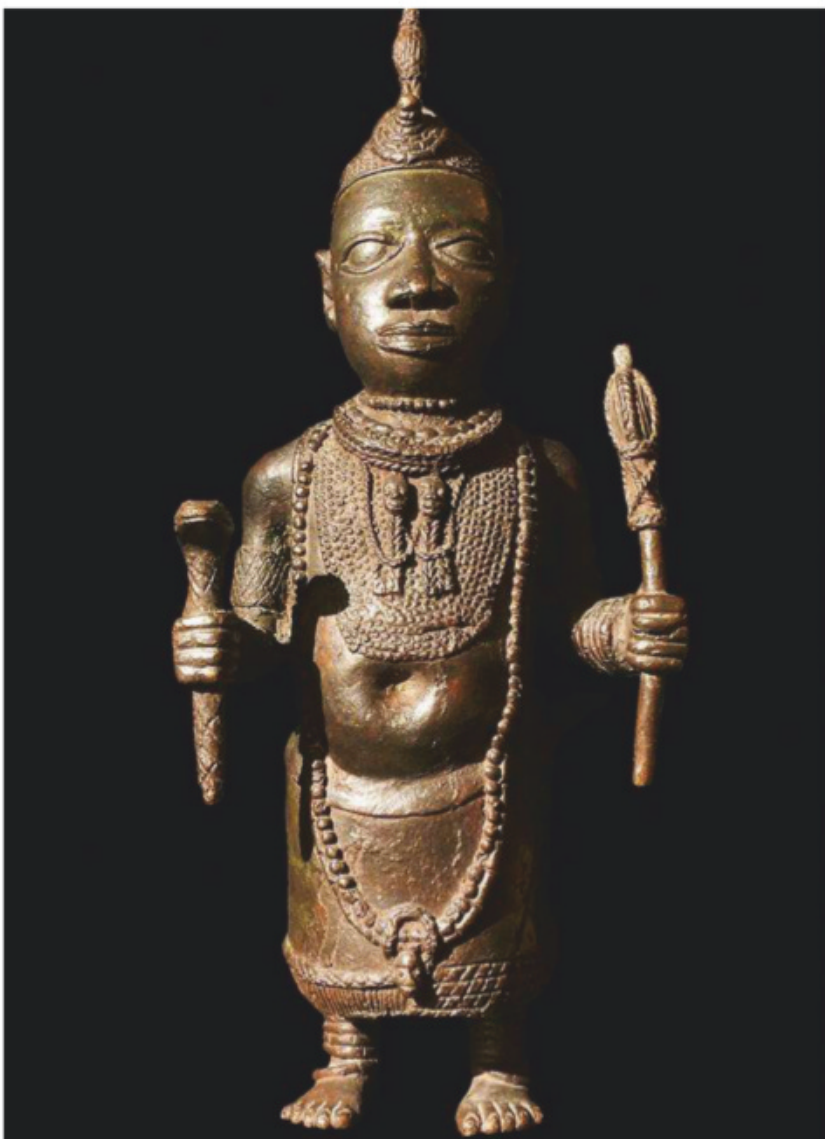
Working as a member of the Benin Dialogue Group – along with Nigerian and other European museums – the British Museum is supporting the development of the new Benin Royal Museum and has confirmed that it will lend objects to the new museum.

**Lissant Bolton** is Keeper of the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at The British Museum





British soldiers with looted artefacts during the punitive expedition to Benin City (now in southern Nigeria) of 1897. Many of these pieces, known as the Benin Bronzes, are held in European museums



BRIDGEMAN

A bronze figure of an Edo king of the Benin empire, which flourished in what's now Nigeria from the 15th century. Several such pieces are being loaned to Nigeria by the British Museum and Paris's Musée du Quai Branly

Marie Rodet

## “In exhibitions that pop up in local museums, the history of the artefacts – particularly their looting – is generally invisible”



In November, an influential report on the restitution of African cultural heritage in France was published. A number of experts and museum directors voiced opposition to such restitution, in part because they claimed it would empty French museums of their collections. The controversy is not new, especially in the UK, where such discussions regularly makes the headlines.

Much less known are the African and Asian artefacts held by smaller provincial museums across Europe, many of which were donated by semi-public figures or private collectors who took part in the European colonial projects in Africa and Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Local museums often lack the expertise or even interest to deal with and preserve these collections. Such artefacts are rarely exhibited and, if they are, their origins, descriptions and history are often displayed inaccurately.

An interesting example of this happened couple of years ago. The local museum in Le Havre displayed a number of artefacts looted by the French General Louis Archinard during the conquest of what later became the colony of French Sudan (now Mali), and which formed part of his private collection donated to the museum nearly a century ago. The exhibition, called Le Havre-Dakar, was a collaboration with Senegalese museums, which lent some pieces. The focus was on the historical and contemporary cultural relationship between France and Senegal, but most of the African pieces exhibited were actually from what is today Mali. Captions provided few details of their origin, and no indication of the context of their acquisition, except for the note ‘collection Archinard’. The exhibition as a whole made little sense for the wider public, because the museum lacked expertise in African studies.

Generally, in such exhibitions that pop up once in a while in local museums, the history of the artefacts (and particularly their looting) is invisible. In this context, the case for their return appears even stronger, enabling appreciation by an audience avid to learn more about their past. Those artefacts that, in a provincial European context, may appear of little value, should be returned to their countries of origin where they can be fully appreciated as real treasures and valuable heritage.

**Marie Rodet** is senior lecturer in the history of Africa at SOAS University of London



**Felipe Fernández-Armesto**

**“The heritage of humankind can’t be divvied up like a lottery jackpot. Museums are among the best places to share it”**



Call it appropriation, if you like, and rage at it in your folly: cultural exchange is the starting point of progress. As people, objects, ideas, products and habits get swapped across the world, they inspire new departures, launch new thoughts and create new ways of life. Without Renaissance *Wunderkammern* there would have been no Scientific Revolution.

Without museums of colonial artefacts, Picasso and Brancusi would have gone on seeing with old-world eyes. No one should be ashamed of having items from elsewhere at home.

Museums are essential for research – to understand objects and texts, you have to be able to compare and contextualise them. Equality in education demands museums; without them, only Grand Tourers would see worldwide wonders.

If you start returning works that communities claim on grounds of ethnic or national emotional investment, you can’t fairly deny any request for repatriation. You condemn museums to pillage more destructive than anything their endowers ever did. Pieces belong wherever they have long resided: they become part of the history of the British Museum, say, as much as of ancient Egypt or 19th-century Nigeria.

The heritage of humankind can’t be divvied up like a lottery jackpot. Museums are among the best places for it to be widely shared. International conventions, subject to a reasonable statute of limitations, rightly forbid museums from garnering the proceeds of filching and looting. But think of Sweden without Christina’s dodgily gotten gains, or Constantinople without the goodies Constantine planted in the Hippodrome, or Venice without the Horses of San Marco.

Spoils of long-ago wars, the cut-price acquisitions of plutocratic treasure-hunters and the injudicious gifts of bygone diplomatic exchange can stay where they are – where they have come to be part of the history not just of their places of origin, but of the world. Do you miss your marbles or pine for your scrolls? Go to where they are gathered and revel in the breadth of admiration on which your supposed ancestors’ skills can draw.

**Felipe Fernández-Armesto** is the author of *Out of Our Minds: A History of What We Think and How We Think It*, which will be published this summer by OneWorld

**Bryony Onciul**

**“Arguing that repatriation will ruin museums obscures the fact that the opposite can be true”**



Museums play an important role in society. They authorise the way we understand ourselves in the world based on our shared histories, founding cultural concepts and imagined futures. Museums also reframe and challenge our assumptions by revealing hidden histories and illuminating different ways of knowing and being. However, many museums can also be criticised as institutions built on colonial foundations.

Calls to return objects to source communities may appear to threaten collections; however, repatriation can actually create opportunities to innovate, decolonise and strengthen museums. Repatriation claims are not wholesale demands to empty stores of treasures; rather, each is a very specific, carefully considered case-by-case request for a particular item that holds significance to a community. Though some requests come from governments, many come from indigenous peoples whose material culture and ancestral remains were sold, taken or traded during colonisation. The argument that repatriation will ruin museums has not only been disproven, it obscures the fact that the very opposite can be true.

When culturally significant materials are returned in a sensitive, responsible manner, new relations can be forged that enhance museums, collections and public understanding. For example, Glenbow Museum in Alberta, Canada repatriated sacred bundles to the Blackfoot First Nations. This created a reciprocal relationship that led to the co-creation of a permanent museum gallery, new acquisitions donated by community members, and innovative curatorial practice.

Returning artefacts to source communities helps to maintain tangible and intangible connections to ancestors and homelands, while also potentially rebuilding cultural pride and autonomy after periods of cultural suppression. Repatriation inspires the creation of new items for public display and events that celebrate museum–community relationships.

Hoarding treasures is not enriching. Responding to access and repatriation requests acknowledges our globally intertwined histories, and creates mutually beneficial relations that can revitalise museums, and can deepen our understanding and appreciation of our collective past and future.

**Bryony Onciul** is senior lecturer in public history at the University of Exeter, and author of *Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonising Engagement* (Routledge, 2015)





A member of the Blackfoot community in Alberta. The repatriation of sacred bundles by the Glenbow Museum, in the Canadian province of Alberta, to the Blackfoot First Nations created a reciprocal relationship



The Horses of San Marco, looted from Constantinople, at that time capital of the Byzantine empire, in 1204. “Museums are among the best places for heritage to be widely shared – think of Venice without the Horses of San Marco [for example],” writes Felipe Fernández-Armesto

**Kehinde Andrews**

## “This is not a complicated issue: the only ‘right’ to hold these artefacts was the dominion of empire”



The empire may have crumbled, but British colonial arrogance towards the former colonies certainly has not. While colonising a quarter of the globe, Britain stole treasures and artefacts for the British public to marvel at in museums. There simply is no justification for holding on to these stolen goods.

Nigeria has been struggling for decades to get Britain to return the Benin Bronzes, a collection of sculptures and plaques that decorated the palace of the Kingdom of Benin as early as the 15th century. British forces looted the bronzes during an expedition in 1897, and British museums seem to think this gives them a divine right to keep hold of them. Nigeria’s National Commission for Museums and Monuments has become so frustrated that they are now resorting to asking to borrow their own property back.

This is not the only example of the idea of loaning back stolen goods. The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is proposing to loan back the Maqdala treasures to Ethiopia, which were ‘acquired’ when British troops plundered the kingdom of Emperor Tewodros II in 1868. So great was the theft that it took 15 elephants and 200 mules to move the loot. After refusing Ethiopia’s demands to return the items, including a crown and a wedding dress, the V&A put them on display in 2018 and offered the loan as a ‘compromise’.

In reality this is not a complicated issue. Britain, and other European nations, stole treasures from across the world to display in their museums. Their only ‘right’ to hold these artefacts was the dominion of empire. As much as many people may yearn for an ‘Empire 2.0’, those days are long gone. The continued sense of entitlement is now just a delusion, and Britain and its European neighbours owe restitution to their former colonies in a myriad of ways. Returning some of the proceeds of their crimes to their rightful owners would be a step in the right direction.

**Kehinde Andrews** is professor of black studies at Birmingham City University and the author of books including *Back to Black: Retelling Black Radicalism for the 21st Century* (Zed Books, 2018)





Olivette Otele

## “Many countries in west Africa do not have the facilities to preserve valuable artefacts”



In 2017, French president Emmanuel Macron promised that African artefacts would be returned to the continent. The economic and political dimensions of the decision didn't escape observers. Europe's hold on Africa's natural resources had been under threat for decades, but the focus on culture and art raised eyebrows.

In that context, Macron commissioned historian Bénédicte Savoy and Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr to produce a report on restitution. It recommended that a portion of the 90,000 objects originating from Sub-Saharan Africa currently held in French public collections should be returned to the nations from which they originated – including in the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris. When it opened in 2006, this museum caused a storm of controversy because its presentation of objects from African, American, Asian and Oceanian civilisations omitted any mention of colonial conquests or the way those artefacts had been acquired.

The debate did not, therefore, start with Macron. Yet Macron's initiative has plunged museums into difficult but necessary discussions about the past, and about the historical roles of museums as vehicles of dominant Eurocentric narratives. In Britain, the debate has led to other responses. Lending objects to nations from where they originated was seen as a way forward, but that sparked controversy when the objects in question were obtained through looting, provoking an image of a thief lending his prizes to the owner.

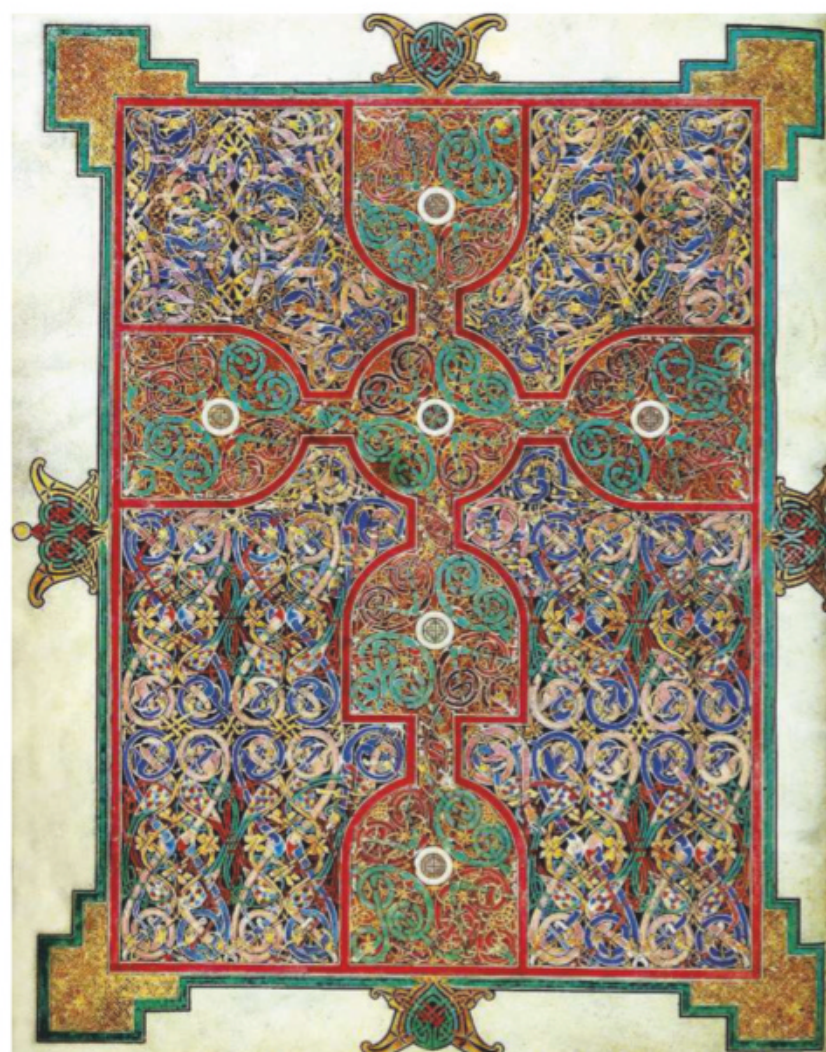
British museums have a staggering number of objects that are not displayed and are unlikely to be seen by museum-goers. Having been evaluated, these objects are now British assets sitting in storage. On the other hand, the Savoy-Sarr report recommended that nations ask for restitution. Many countries in west Africa have not come forward to do so because they do not have the facilities to preserve those valuable artefacts and protect them from theft; new funding would need to be provided to museums already suffering from a lack of government funding.

Nonetheless, in principle, as far as France is concerned these countries are entitled to restitution. In Britain, restitution is still met with resistance. It seems the debate in the UK about decolonising museums is only about diversifying the narrative, not the restitution of artefacts.

**Olivette Otele** is professor of history at Bath Spa University



Works of art stolen from Jews by the Nazis, stored in Mauerbach Charterhouse, Austria, 1971. The Austrian government made very limited efforts to alert the pre-Third-Reich owners or their families to possible claims to these works, and by 1972 very few had been returned



An illustrated 'carpet page' from the Lindisfarne Gospels, a manuscript produced around 700 AD and currently held in the British Library. Should it be returned to Northumberland?

AKG IMAGES



**Simon Jenkins**

## “Most of the old imperial museums are overstocked, hoarding material in storerooms, never to see the light of day”



This is not going to go away. When someone else has something you think is yours, you want it back. If it was stolen or otherwise illegally obtained, there is no question. It is yours.

The problem with so much museum treasure is that its acquisition was often dubious, and its emotional content often significant. Over time, as countries grow stronger and prouder, this will become ever more political. Newly confident nations will want to recover symbols of their past, whatever their status.

It is no answer for museum directors to plead rules and protocols. They are there to be changed. Great works of world art and archaeology belong to peoples, not to museums. That they are incarcerated, often out of context and far from ‘home’, in vast and sombre mausoleums is itself a sadness. That their seclusion can only be justified by references to visitor numbers or the divine right of scholarship is sadder.

There is an increasing acceptance of the desirability of repatriating ‘crown jewels’ and other works with a peculiar bond to their country of origin, be the artefact in question a skull, a statue, a boat or a dress. It seems absurd to deny Easter Island its evocative *moai* statues, which should be gazing out over the Pacific, or Gibraltar its Neanderthal head. Why in principle should the Lindisfarne Gospels not be in Lindisfarne and the Lewis Chessmen not (all) in Lewis?

If international standards of conservation are agreed, there is no intellectual case for these objects being held abroad, particularly in these days of mass travel and online accessibility. Most of the old imperial museums are overstocked, hoarding material in basements and storerooms, never to see the light of day. There is no conceivable reason for not dispersing these collections.

The objects bequeathed us by the past belong to humanity. At very least they belong to the people whose ancestors created them and understandably want them back. Locking them away in London, New York or Paris is no longer defensible. Throw open the doors, and the salerooms.

**Simon Jenkins** is a journalist and author. His latest book is *A Short History of Europe: From Pericles to Putin* (Viking, 2018)

**Astrid Swenson**

## “Despite a language of ‘return’, restitution is often about negotiating the future, not the past”



There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this complex question. The vast majority of objects moved from their original location to a museum have no claimants. Some, though, are in museums as a result of looting and other forms of violence and coercion. The international principles that have made wartime looting illegal and led to the return of objects since the end of

the Napoleonic wars, and following the Nazi confiscations of art, have in the past rarely been applied to contexts of colonial conquest and subjugation. It is high time to address this.

Historical research is a necessary part of this process, to determine how objects were acquired. Moreover, it can help us comprehend and question why legal and moral ideas about restitution have become connected to arguments about preservation, access, use, successorship, nationalism and universalism. The history of restitution since the 19th century can also help us understand that, despite a language of ‘return’, restitution is often overwhelmingly about negotiating the future rather than the past. It has often been used to rebuild communities, and offers a way for dialogue and reconciliation.

Sometimes a straightforward ‘return’ is neither possible nor desirable – either because an object is ‘orphaned’, as is the case with some objects that belonged to Jews murdered during the Holocaust, or with objects whose provenance cannot be established. Sometimes there could be more than one ‘rightful owner’. Should the sword of Grand Master Jean de Valette, acquired by Napoleon when the Knights of Malta surrendered the island in 1798, belong to the Louvre, the Order of St John (now in Rome), or a Maltese institution?

Recent routes to resolution show the way, through loans, co-curation, and narrative panels that make changes in context visible, emphasising the trajectories and transculturality of objects and people. Solutions can allow for multiple uses – for example, a 2000 agreement between the American Museum of Natural History and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon enables both scientific study and spiritual gatherings. The display of an object’s history can help reveal the emotions that have become attached to objects in transit, and create dialogue about underlying losses and hopes in the search for just and fair solutions. 🌐

**Astrid Swenson** is professor of history at Bath Spa University, and co-editor of *From Plunder to Preservation* (OUP, 2013)

SUBSCRIBE **TODAY**

# Enjoy the latest issue **FREE** with a 14-day trial today!

*BBC World Histories* is the new bi-monthly title from the *BBC History Magazine* team, offering accessible and in-depth features exploring a wide range of topics from our global past



**zinio**<sup>TM</sup>



INTRODUCTORY OFFER





**Have *BBC World Histories* delivered  
straight to your tablet**

**Save when you subscribe**

**BBC World Histories**





### **Sale of the century**

US secretary of state William Seward (seated left) signs the agreement to buy Alaska from Russia in 1867. Though derided at the time as 'Seward's Folly', the purchase proved astute

### **Replanting the flag**

US soldiers land on Guam on 21 July 1944 at the start of the battle to retake the Micronesian island from Japan, which had invaded in December 1941



GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK



# AMERICA'S HIDDEN EMPIRE

From the end of the 19th century, the United States collected a roster of overseas territories in the Pacific and Caribbean. **Daniel Immerwahr** explores the story of America's forgotten imperial expansion programme

## Father figures

Men dressed as Uncle Sam and a Spanish Conquistador wave from a float during a US Independence Day parade in San Juan, Puerto Rico. People born on the island are US citizens – but aren't eligible to vote in presidential elections





**O**n 25 October 2018, a Category 5 storm ploughed into the United States. With maximum sustained winds of 180 miles per hour, it was the most powerful storm anywhere on Earth that year, and the strongest in US history since 1935. It tore roofs from houses and badly damaged the power grid.

Despite this damage, the superstorm barely made a dent in the national news cycle. It received less than 1% of the television coverage that had been devoted to Hurricane Florence – a storm that battered North Carolina – earlier in the year. It was, wrote Anita Hofschnider in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, “The super typhoon American media forgot”.

That storm garnered so little attention because of where it hit. Typhoon Yutu laid waste to Saipan and Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands, in the western Pacific Ocean. These islands are part of the United States, and people born there are US citizens – but few on the mainland seemed aware of that. “I’m afraid most Americans don’t know that we have overseas territories,” commented Phil Klotzbach, a hurricane expert at Colorado State University.

Weather, like war, has a way of teaching geography lessons. In fact, the US has a number of overseas territories, including Puerto Rico, Guam and American Samoa, and has had more in the past. On the eve of its entry into the Second World War, the US empire – which also included the populous Philippines as well as the territories of Hawai‘i and Alaska, nearly two decades before those latter two became states in 1959 – had some 19 million colonial subjects. At that time, if you lived in the US (the whole country, not just the part on the North American continent), you were more likely to be colonised than you were to be an immigrant – indeed, there were more colonial subjects than African-Americans.

Historians today are wrestling with these facts. Increasingly, they are telling the history of the US as the history of an empire.

**T**hat history starts from day one of the nation. “The Name of this Confederacy shall be the ‘United States of America,’” read John Dickinson’s draft of the Articles of Confederation in 1776, capturing the heady rush of political possibility in those early days. The country would be a union rather than an empire, composed of states rather than of a motherland and colonies.

Except that the name wasn’t accurate. By the time Britain ratified the Treaty of Paris in 1784,

## Whatever the country named the United States was, it wasn’t a union, it wasn’t a republic, and it wasn’t limited to states

which granted sovereignty to the new country, it wasn’t a union of states. The government had taken its westernmost lands from such states as Virginia and Massachusetts and placed them under federal supervision. Thus, the United States of America was a collection of states and federal territories – and it has been that way ever since.

For the first seven decades or so of US history, those territories neighboured the states and were expected to join them. But just three years after completing its final western annexation in 1854 – gaining a sliver of Mexico known as the Gadsden Purchase – the United States embarked on a new phase of expansion overseas. It started by claiming dozens of uninhabited islands in the Caribbean and Pacific, sources of guano, essential fertiliser for nitrogen-parched farms. A deal with Russia yielded Alaska. A pivotal war with Spain in 1898 brought the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam into the country, and the non-Spanish lands of Hawai‘i and American Samoa were annexed at around the same time. By 1900, the overseas territories encompassed an area nearly as large as the entire US at its founding, and held a population numbering more than twice as many as that living in the original land area.

Impressed by the country’s overseas expansion, cartographers offered new maps showing the Philippines, Puerto Rico and other territories alongside the states. Writers, convinced that overseas empire marked a new era, reconsidered the name of the country. Technically, its name was the one Dickinson had given it – the ‘United States of America’ – but in the 19th century it had most commonly been called ‘the United States’, ‘the Union’ or ‘the Republic’ for short. Yet after the great imperial land rush, these names no longer fitted as well. Whatever this country was, it wasn’t a union, it wasn’t a republic, and it wasn’t limited to states. Various names were proposed: ‘Imperial America’, the ‘Greater Republic’, and – a phrase that appeared in the title of seven books published in the decade after 1898 – ‘Greater America’.



### State change

A poster for 1898's Greater America Exposition in Omaha. The name 'Greater America' was proposed as an alternative to the 'United States of America'





### Calm after the storm

The wreckage of a house in Saipan hit by Typhoon Yutu in October 2018. Though Yutu wreaked devastation on the US territory, it received little news coverage in the mainland



### Foundling father

In a cartoon of 1898, a basket of babies labelled Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii and 'Philippine' is handed to Uncle Sam and Columbia by 'Manifest Destiny'



## One mooted name appeared in the title of seven books published in the decade after 1898: 'Greater America'

Dissatisfaction with 'the United States' led to a more enduring verbal shift. Before 1898, though its people were called 'Americans', it was unusual to call the country 'America'. One could travel 5,000 miles and read 100 newspapers before encountering that word, a British writer observed. 'America' appeared in none of the patriotic songs ('Yankee Doodle', 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic', 'Hail, Columbia', 'The Stars and Stripes Forever', 'The Star-Spangled Banner'). A search of speeches by presidents from the founding to 1898 yields only 11 unambiguous references to the country as 'America' – about one per decade.

Yet after 1898, things changed quickly. Theodore Roosevelt, the first president to take office after the war with Spain, used the word 'America' in his first annual message and then frequently thereafter. The name was looser, more expansive, and implied nothing about the country being a union of states. Every president since has used 'America' freely. And new anthems cropped up, with such titles as 'America the Beautiful' and 'God Bless America'.

**I**n the years after 1898, it was obvious that the United States was an empire. Its maps showed off the colonies, and powerful men in Washington voiced imperial ambitions openly. But then something strange happened. Perhaps due to the exhaustion of a violent war of pacification in the Philippines, or perhaps due to a persistent vision of the country as a republic, powerful people started ignoring the colonies. Without giving them up, the US simply spoke less of them – brushing them under the rug. By the 1910s, they had largely dropped off the maps, and they were no longer called 'colonies'. That word, warned a federal official in 1914, "must not be used to express the relationship that exists between our government and its dependent peoples".

This cognitive dissonance around empire, it should be said, was fairly unusual. Britain wasn't confused as to whether it had colonies. It honoured them annually on 24 May, Empire Day, celebrated in schools for decades and made an official holiday in 1916. The United States, as it happens, had its own patriotic holiday, one that also started in schools before receiving federal

# Altered States

The global expansion of the US

## Northern Mariana Islands

1944: US assumed government

Claimed by Spain then Germany, and invaded by Japan during the First World War, the islands (which include Saipan and Tinian) were invaded by the US in 1944. It is now an insular area and commonwealth of the US.



Wake Island

## Philippines

1898: ceded to the US by Spain

1946: independence

Claimed by Spain from 1521, the Philippines declared independence in 1898 before being ceded to the US that year. The campaign continued intermittently until achieving its goal on 4 July 1946.

## Guam

1898: ceded to the US by Spain

Another former Spanish possession ceded to the US following the Spanish-American War, this island in Micronesia is now an unincorporated and organised territory of the US.







## Alaska

1867: bought by US

Settled by Russian fur trappers in the 18th century, the territory of 586,412 square miles was sold by Russia to the United States for US\$7.2m. It became the 49th state on 3 January 1959.

## United States

1776: declared independence

On 4 July 1776, the 13 colonies at war with Great Britain declared independence as the United States of America. This area was expanded by the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, the addition of Florida (ceded by Spain) in 1819, then the annexation of Texas in 1845 and sole occupation of Oregon in 1846. Much of what's now the south-west was ceded by Mexico in 1848, with the final swathe of Arizona and New Mexico added with the Gadsden Purchase in 1853.

## Cuba

1898: US military government

1902: independence

After nearly four centuries under Spanish control, Cuba came under US military government after the Spanish-American War of 1898, itself partly sparked by the actions of the Cuban independence movement. Cuba became independent on 20 May 1902. The US lease on Guantanamo Bay, signed in 1903, has no fixed expiry date.

## Puerto Rico

1898: ceded to the US by Spain

Christopher Columbus landed in Puerto Rico ('Rich Port') in 1493. The Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-American War in 1898 ceded the island to the US. Puerto Ricans received US citizenship in 1917 and Puerto Rico became a US commonwealth in 1952.

Midway Islands

Johnston Atoll

Howland Island

Palmyra Atoll

Baker Island

Jarvis Island

## Hawai'i

1898: annexed by the US

American sugar plantations were established in the Hawai'ian islands in the 1830s and, after a period of instability, in 1893 an American-supported coup ousted the government. On 7 July 1898 the US annexed Hawai'i, which was admitted as the 50th state on 21 August 1959.



## US Virgin Islands

Bought by the US in 1917

The Caribbean islands of St Croix, St John and St Thomas were bought by the US government from Denmark on 17 January 1917. In 1927, their inhabitants were granted American citizenship.

## Panama Canal Zone

1904: control taken by US

1979: zone abolished

A narrow zone around the Panama Canal was ceded to the US from 1904, when it began construction. This zone was abolished and the land returned to Panama in 1979.

## American Samoa

1899-1904: ceded to the US

European explorers arrived in these South Pacific islands from the 18th century, and US naval and coaling stations were established in the 1870s. Following the Second Samoan Civil War, the eastern islands were ceded to the US between 1899 and 1904.



## United States Minor Outlying Islands

Territories with no permanent residents in the Pacific include Baker Island, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Midway Atoll, Palmyra Atoll and Wake Island.



# The US in the Pacific

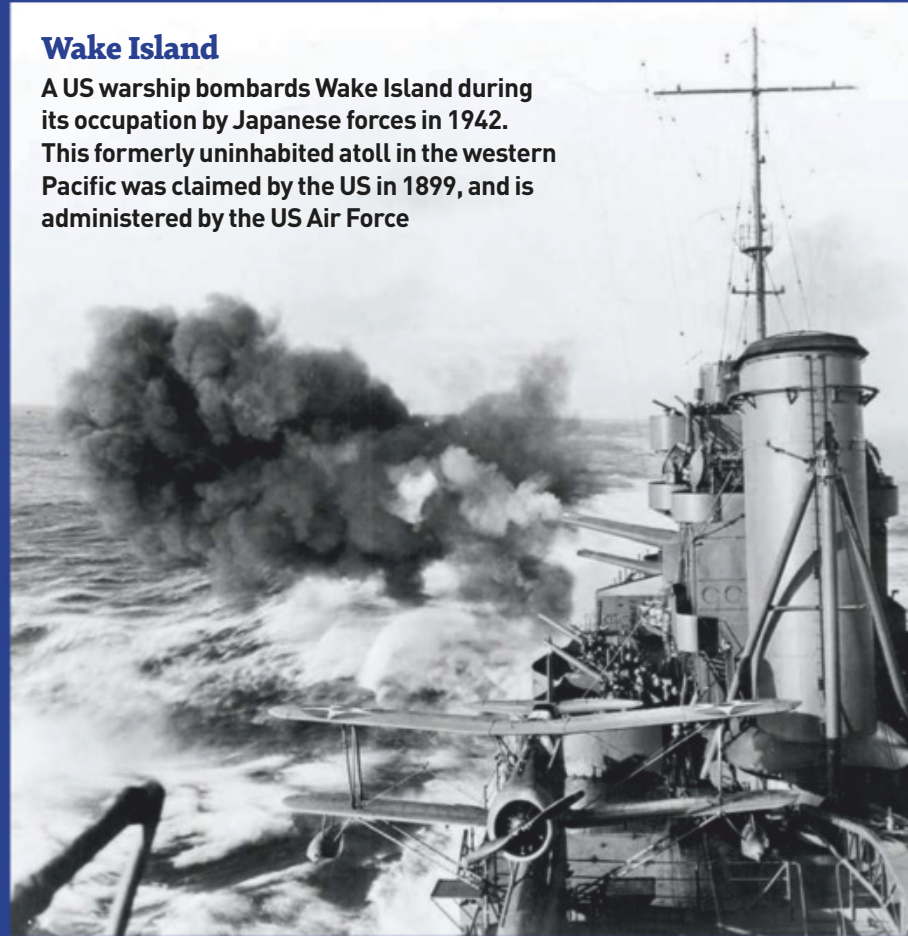


## Guam

Local children watch a young American boy play with their dog in 1955. Originally inhabited by Chamoru people, Guam was claimed by Spain in 1565, then by the US in 1898

## Wake Island

A US warship bombards Wake Island during its occupation by Japanese forces in 1942. This formerly uninhabited atoll in the western Pacific was claimed by the US in 1899, and is administered by the US Air Force



## Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands

A US coastguard with a machine gun wears a kimono and totes a parasol during the Second World War. US forces took Saipan and the rest of the archipelago from June 1944; inhabitants subsequently voted for integration with the US







### American Samoa

American anthropologist Margaret Mead wearing native garb during field studies of the people of American Samoa. Her famous book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) omits the crucial fact that those people were in fact US nationals



### Philippines

An injured Filipino woman and her child during the battle of Manila in 1945. An estimated 1.5 million people died in the Philippines during the Second World War – by far the bloodiest action ever to take place on US soil

## This lack of attention to the colonies particularly mattered in the 1930s, when Japan's imperial ambitions became clear

recognition in 1916. The US version was called Flag Day, and was designed to encourage citizens to gather “in united demonstration of their feeling as a nation”, as President Woodrow Wilson put it in 1916. There was no holiday for the empire.

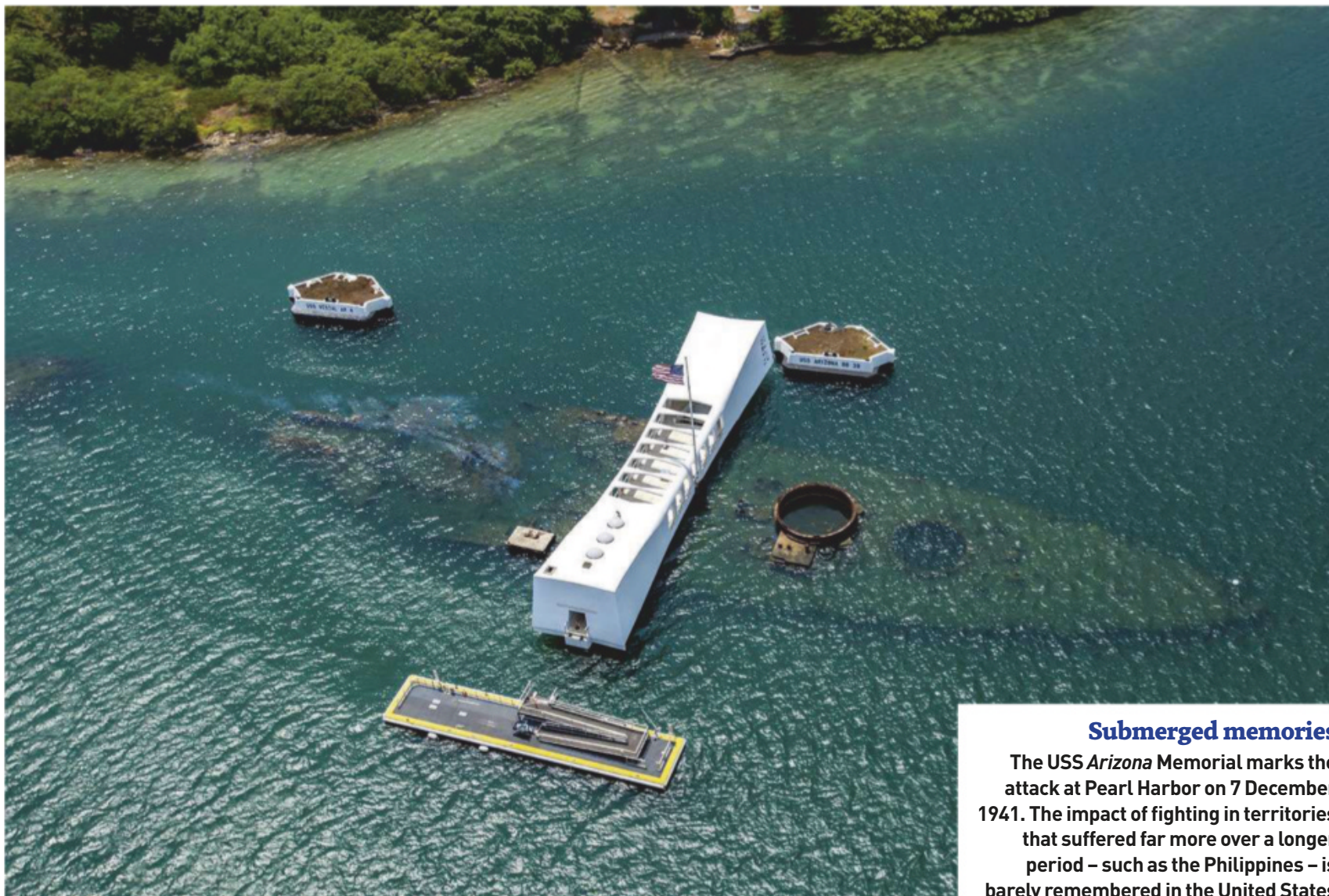
Writers said little about the colonies. The most famous literary engagement with them was surely *Coming of Age in Samoa*, a much-read 1928 ethnography by the anthropologist Margaret Mead. But Mead wrote of ‘Samoa’, the region, not of ‘American Samoa’, the colony where she had lived, and she avoided mention of colonies, territories and empires altogether. It’s entirely possible to read Mead’s book without realising that the “brown Polynesian people” she describes encountering on a “South Sea island” are, just like her, US nationals.

In 1930, a representative year, the *New York Times* printed more articles about Poland than about the Philippines, more about Albania than Alaska. It ran nearly three times as many articles about Britain’s largest territory, India, than it did about all US territories combined – territories that held more than 10% of the US population.

**T**his lack of attention to the colonies mattered. It mattered especially in the 1930s, when Japan’s imperial ambitions in Asia became clear. A quick glance at the map revealed Guam, the Philippines, Alaska, American Samoa and Hawai‘i as potential targets – indeed, Japan did ultimately attack them all. But polls showed little mainland interest in sending the US military to defend such places, and military planners did little to fortify them. As a result, the meagre defences in the Pacific territories proved unable to repel Japan’s first attack when it eventually came in December 1941.

That attack is usually remembered in the US simply as a strike on the Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawai‘i. Yet, within a span of hours, Japan also attacked the US territories of Midway, Wake Island, Guam and the Philippines; the British colonies of Malaya and Hong Kong; and the independent kingdom of Thailand. Some attacks were launched on 7 December and some on 8 December, but only because Japan’s manoeuvre crossed the international date line. The event, known in the US →





### Submerged memories

The USS *Arizona* Memorial marks the attack at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The impact of fighting in territories that suffered far more over a longer period – such as the Philippines – is barely remembered in the United States

as ‘Pearl Harbor’, was in fact a near-simultaneous strike on various Pacific holdings of the Allies.

Pearl Harbor was the first US target struck. But it wasn’t clearly the place where the Japanese did the greatest damage; the US Army’s official history rates the strike on the Philippines as just as damaging. Moreover, whereas the attack on Pearl Harbor was just that – an individual attack, never to be repeated – the raid on the Philippines was followed by more assaults, then by invasion and conquest. The Philippines, Guam, Wake Island and the western tip of Alaska – the populations of which totalled more than 16 million US nationals – all fell to the Japanese.

**T**he US eventually recaptured its lost Pacific territories, but at a cost rarely acknowledged. It bombed or shelled every major structure in Agaña (now Hagåtña), capital of Guam, in its fight to reconquer the island. Manila, capital of the Philippines, was similarly decimated, as were many other Philippine urban centres. “We levelled entire cities with our bombs and shell fire,” recounted the Philippine high commissioner. In the end, he said, “there was nothing left”. It’s been estimated that more than 1.5 million people in the Philippines were killed during the Second World War. It was easily the bloodiest event ever to take place on US soil – more than twice as lethal as the Civil War.

The war in the Philippines isn’t part of national memory in the US. The National Mall in Washington DC has no shrine

for the dead of those islands. The carnage was, like Typhoon Yutu, something that happened ‘over there’ – of limited relevance in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Yet empire is worth a thought or two. The Philippines is no longer a US colony, having gained its independence in 1946, and Hawai’i and Alaska are now states. But the United States still has five inhabited overseas territories: Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. Some four million people live in them – four million people who can’t vote in presidential elections, aren’t protected by the constitution and have no role in making federal law.

This disenfranchisement matters. In 2017, Hurricane Maria slammed into Puerto Rico, taking out its electricity for months. Thousands died as a result of the storm, but it wasn’t the weather itself that killed them directly. It was longstanding neglect, followed by a lack of federal aid after the hurricane struck.

“Recognise that we Puerto Ricans are American citizens,” came the desperate plea from the island’s governor, Ricardo Rosselló. Yet a poll of US mainlanders taken after the hurricane showed that only a slight majority – and barely one-third of adults under 30 – were aware of that fact. One wonders if those numbers will be any higher when the next storm hits. 🌐

### Daniel Immerwahr

is associate professor of history at Northwestern University, Illinois. His latest book is *How to Hide an Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States* (Bodley Head, 2019)



# In war and in peace

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES IS CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF COLLABORATION

**O**n the 5th of May this year, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The British Red Cross was one of the five founding members of the IFRC in 1919, alongside the French, American, Italian and Japanese Red Cross Societies.

When it was first founded, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement focused on supporting the sick and wounded in wartime. The end of WWI, however, saw many national societies also take on a peacetime role. The new League of Red Cross Societies (as it was then known) was designed to help coordinate international peacetime Red Cross support.

In the words of the League's original founding Articles of Association, it was created to enable collaboration "in the improvement of health, the prevention of disease and the mitigation of suffering". Today, the IFRC comprises 190 individual national societies, ensuring there is a worldwide network of on-the-

ground volunteers ready for when disaster strikes.

The beginnings of the British Red Cross's own peacetime humanitarian work are closely linked to the founding of the original League. In fact, the charity provided the League's first Director General, Sir David Henderson, and the Supplemental Royal Charter of December 1919 explicitly recognised the right of the British Red Cross to support peacetime first aid and disaster relief work.

## MAKE YOUR MARK

The work carried out by the British Red Cross is as essential today as it was in 1919. It's thanks to the generosity of the charity's supporters that it can always be ready to help those in crisis, whether they're on the other side of the world or on your own street.

By leaving a gift in your will, you can leave your own legacy and ensure that the British Red Cross can continue to support people in need wherever they might be in the world – for another 100 years and beyond.



**For more information about supporting the British Red Cross with a gift in your will and the Free Will scheme, call 0300 500 0401 or visit [redcross.org.uk/freewill](https://redcross.org.uk/freewill)**

 **BritishRedCross**









### ← Middle East maelstrom

Israeli armoured vehicles head for the Golan Heights to face Syrian forces on 7 October 1973, the second day of the Yom Kippur War – so named because it followed the launch of surprise attacks by a coalition of Arab states on the Jewish Day of Atonement. Egypt and Syria aimed to seize land lost in the Six-Day War of 1967 – the Sinai Peninsula by Egypt, and the Golan Heights on the Syrian border. After initial Arab successes, Israeli Defense Forces launched operations towards Damascus and across the Suez Canal, at great cost to both sides. After US and Soviet intervention, a ceasefire was declared in late October, paving the way for reconciliation between Israel and Egypt.

## A YEAR IN PICTURES

# 1973

## Architecture and art, coups and kidnapping

COMPLEMENTS THE BBC RADIO 4 SERIES

**THE DECADE THAT INVENTED THE FUTURE: THE 1970s**



Conflicts flared and ended in Asia while architecture reached new heights and famine ravaged Africa. **Richard Overy** reviews a year also marked by social upheavals and advances in women's rights







### 🕒 A kind of homecoming

An American prisoner of war salutes a US officer in Hanoi on his release following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on 27 January 1973 that heralded the US withdrawal from Vietnam. He was among the first group of 112 soldiers and pilots, dressed in identical grey jackets, released. In February and March 1973, Operation Homecoming repatriated 566 American military personnel, some of whom had spent eight years in confinement. The reaction in the United States was ambivalent: some regarded these men as heroes, others as war criminals.



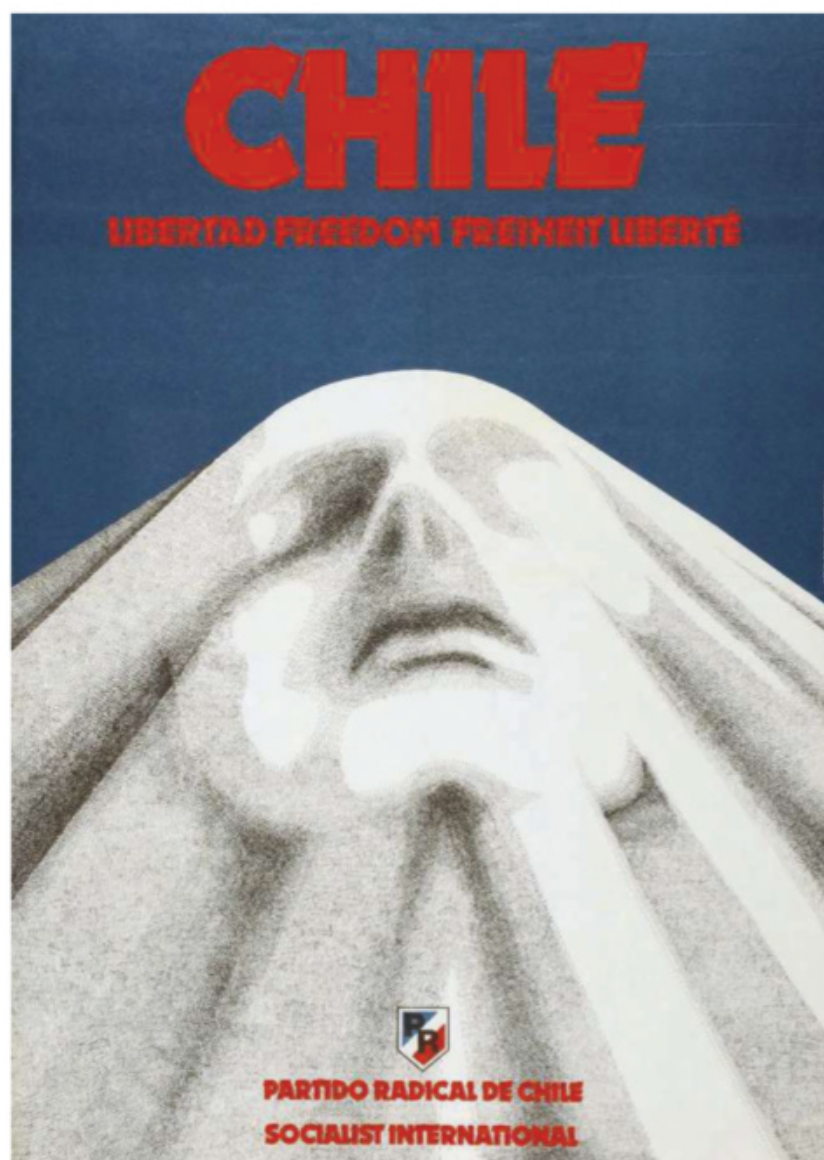


### ⬆ Trading places

A woman walks the floor of the London Stock Exchange on 26 March 1973 – one of the first to be admitted following years of protest against male domination of the finance sector. Women had been barred from the floor since the Exchange opened on its current site in 1802, and even in 1973 were not permitted to participate in dealing. The first female chief executive of the Exchange was appointed in 2001.

### ➡ Calling out the coup

A poster protests the military coup launched on 11 September 1973 by General Augusto Pinochet against the socialist government of Salvador Allende, who had been elected president three years earlier. Allende committed suicide in the presidential palace on the day of the coup. By 1974 Pinochet had established a harsh dictatorship that persecuted the remnants of the Chilean left-wing.





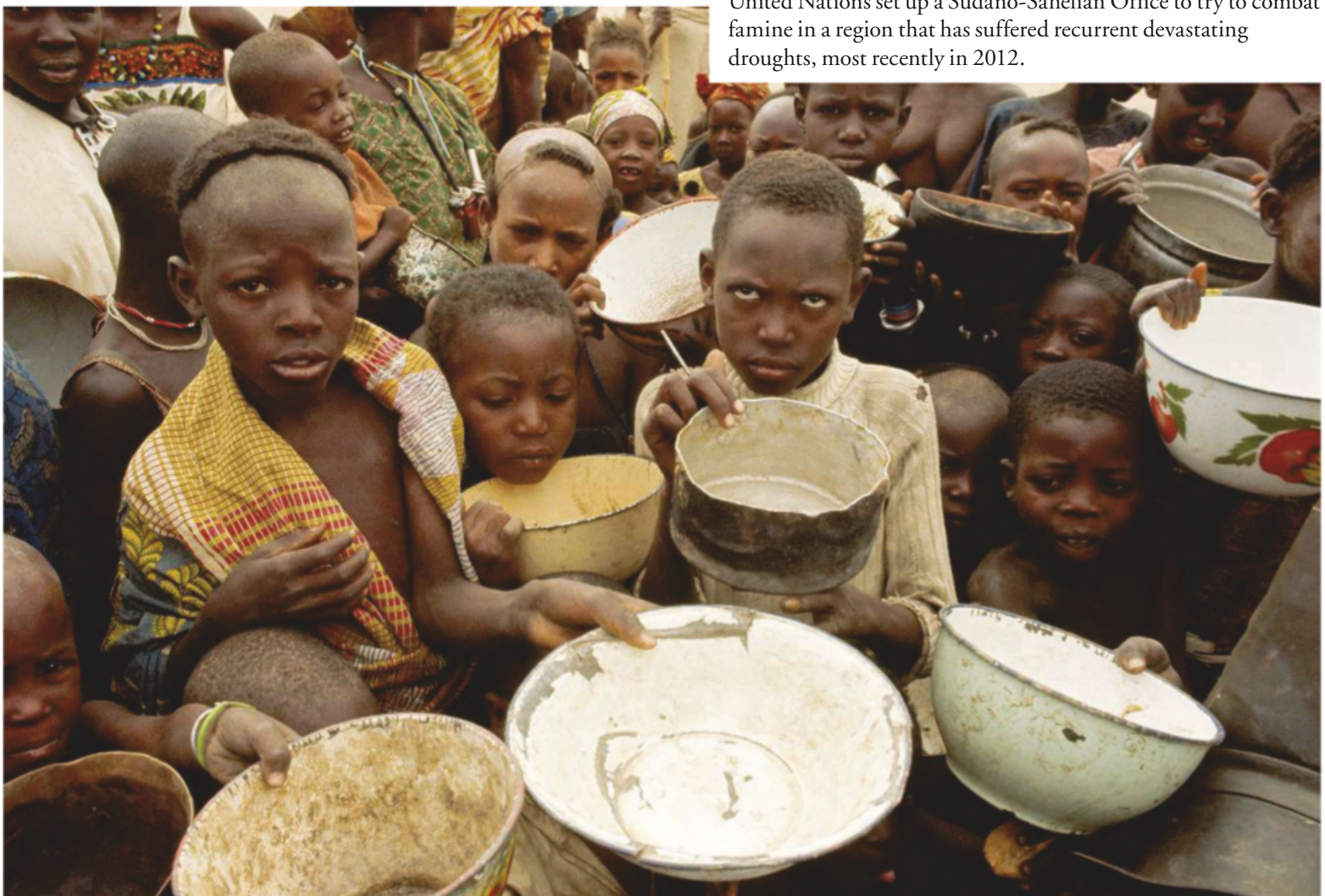


### 🕒 A knight at the opera

Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, attend the inauguration ceremony for the Sydney Opera House on 20 October 1973. The Australian concert hall's radical design became a global architectural icon – like the Eiffel Tower and Big Ben – but its genesis was marked by controversy and long delays. The original design – chosen from entries in a competition in January 1957 – was by Danish architect Jørn Utzon. Construction began in 1959 but Utzon resigned in 1966 before the interior was completed. During her visit, the Queen was treated to a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.

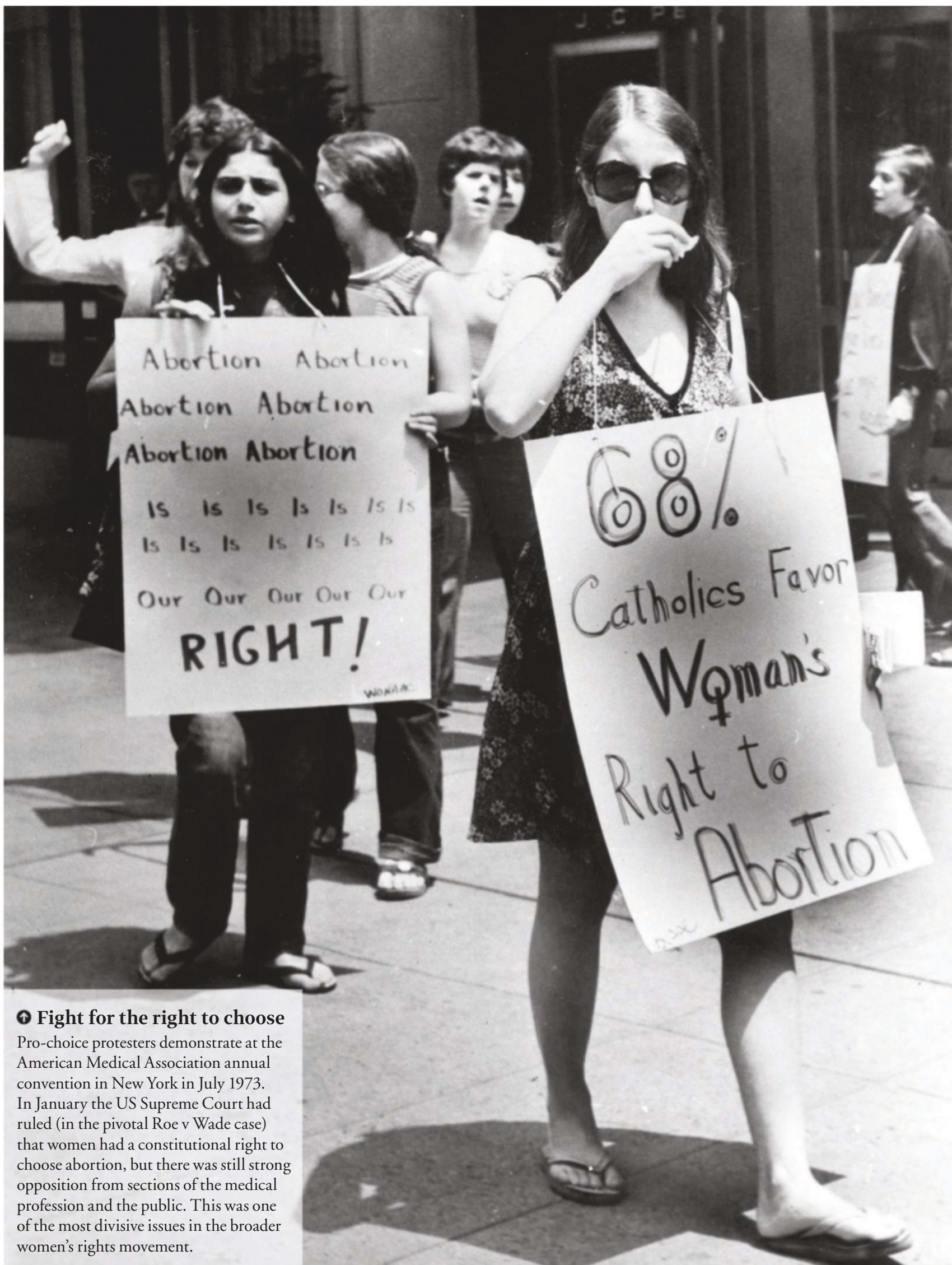
### 🕒 Hungry for help

Children in Burkina Faso ask for food during the acute famine that by 1973 had afflicted the Sahel region of west and central Africa for five years, and which killed more than 100,000 people. Weakened by starvation, many fell victim to a major cholera outbreak – a disease almost eradicated elsewhere. In 1973, the United Nations set up a Sudano-Sahelian Office to try to combat famine in a region that has suffered recurrent devastating droughts, most recently in 2012.



GETTY IMAGES/REX FEATURES-AP IMAGES-SHUTTERSTOCK





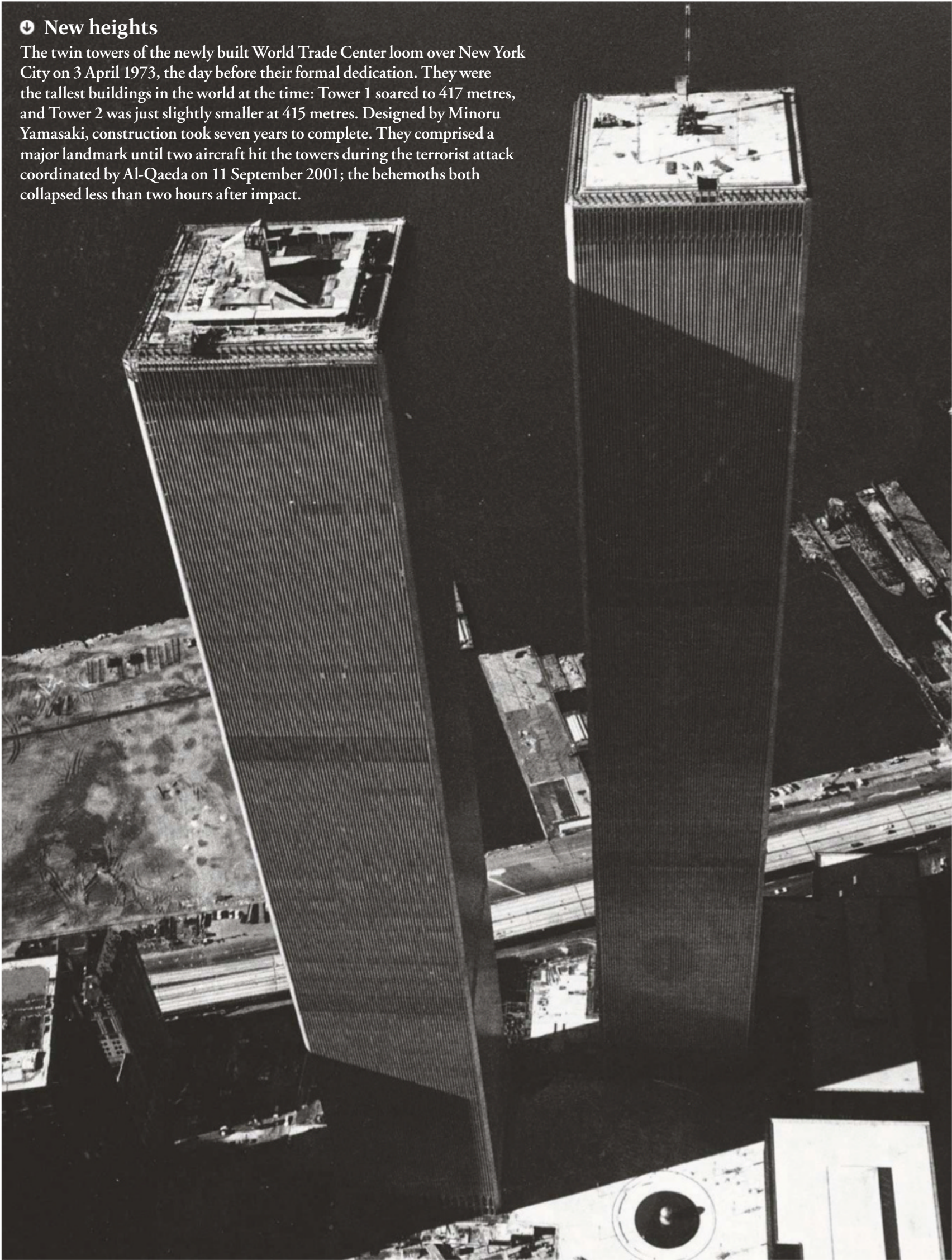
### 📌 Fight for the right to choose

Pro-choice protesters demonstrate at the American Medical Association annual convention in New York in July 1973. In January the US Supreme Court had ruled (in the pivotal *Roe v Wade* case) that women had a constitutional right to choose abortion, but there was still strong opposition from sections of the medical profession and the public. This was one of the most divisive issues in the broader women's rights movement.



📌 New heights

The twin towers of the newly built World Trade Center loom over New York City on 3 April 1973, the day before their formal dedication. They were the tallest buildings in the world at the time: Tower 1 soared to 417 metres, and Tower 2 was just slightly smaller at 415 metres. Designed by Minoru Yamasaki, construction took seven years to complete. They comprised a major landmark until two aircraft hit the towers during the terrorist attack coordinated by Al-Qaeda on 11 September 2001; the behemoths both collapsed less than two hours after impact.



REX FEATURES-AP IMAGES-SHUTTERSTOCK



## ➔ Rural revolution

A propaganda poster of c1973 depicts Mao Zedong in rural China as the 'Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution' was winding down. The 'Great Helmsman' had launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966, ostensibly as a crackdown on so-called anti-revolutionary deviants. Aiming to reassert control of the Communist Party, he encouraged acolytes – particularly young Red Guards – to attack 'counter-revolutionaries'. Despite this congenial image, the Cultural Revolution was devastating for many in the Chinese countryside. By the end of 1976, Mao was dead and the violent movement had come to an end.



## ⬆ Democracy denied

Tanks roll through the centre of Athens in November 1973. Greece had been ruled by a military junta led by President Georgios Papadopoulos since a coup d'état in April 1967, but protest against the authoritarian 'Regime of the Colonels' climaxed with the so-called Athens Polytechnic uprising in mid-November 1973. Later that month Dimitrios Ioannidis, head of the military police, ousted Papadopoulos in another coup, and then tried to suppress 'liberalising' elements. By August 1974, though, popular unrest brought an end to seven years of military rule and saw the return of democracy.

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY/ALAMY

## ⬆ Heir re-apparent

John Paul Getty III, grandson of the American oil billionaire, leaves a police station after his release by kidnappers on 15 December 1973 following payment of a US\$3 million ransom. Getty had been kidnapped in Rome in July; his grandfather initially refused to pay a ransom, relenting only after the younger Getty's severed ear was sent to his family. After the ordeal he suffered long-term mental and physical problems including drug and alcohol dependence. 🌐



### Richard Overy

is professor of history at the University of Exeter, and editor of *The Times Complete History of the World* (William Collins, 2015)



### DISCOVER MORE

Listen to the BBC Radio 4 series **The Decade that Invented the Future: The 1970s** from 15 April



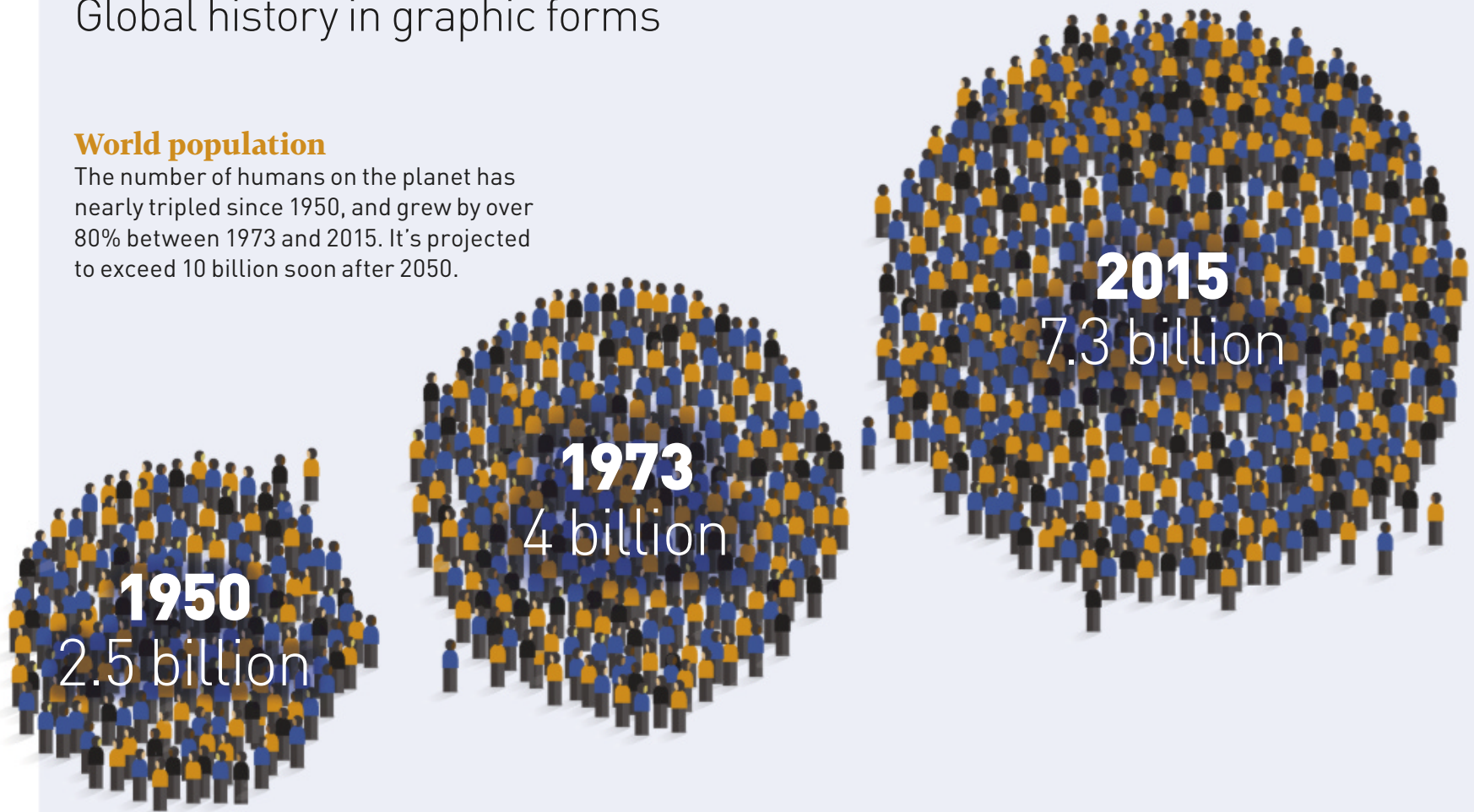


# THE WORLD IN 1973

Global history in graphic forms

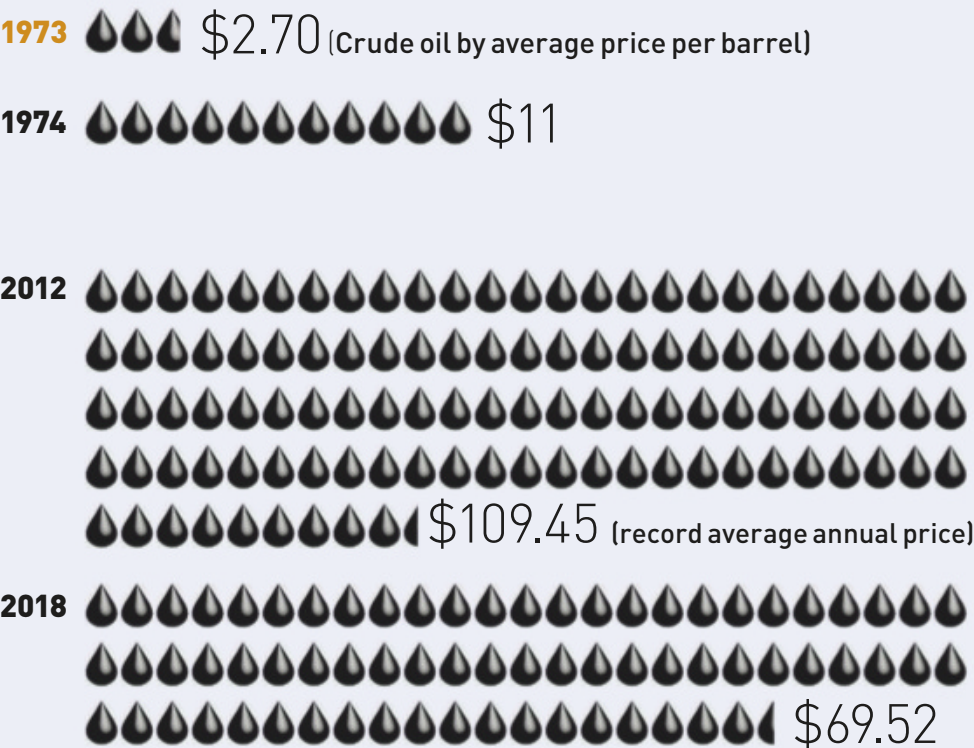
## World population

The number of humans on the planet has nearly tripled since 1950, and grew by over 80% between 1973 and 2015. It's projected to exceed 10 billion soon after 2050.



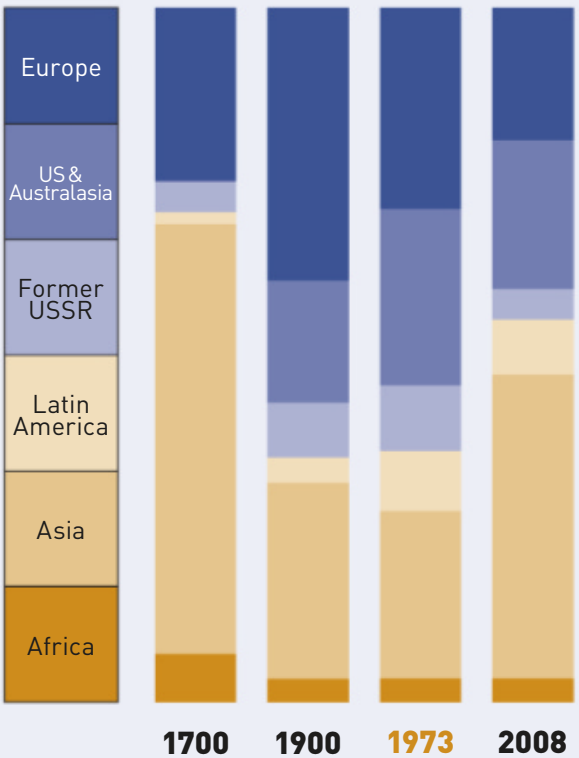
## Price of oil

Average OPEC crude oil prices (per barrel in US\$) soared from October 1973, when Arab oil-producing nations introduced an embargo on oil exports to nations they perceived as supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur war (see p36).



## Global GDP by region

Regional GDPs (as a % of global GDP) have varied dramatically. Particularly notable is the fall in Europe's share and the rise in Asia's since 1973.

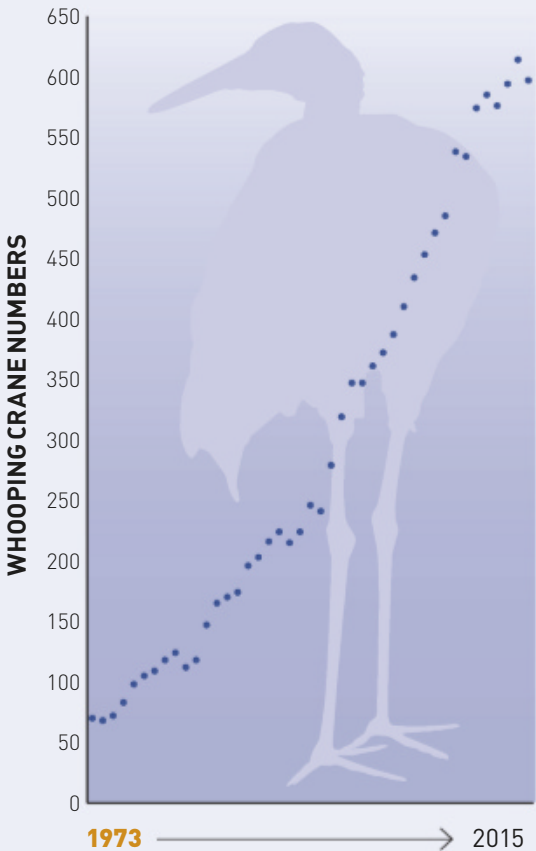


SOURCES: WORLD POPULATION PROSPECTS 2017, UNITED NATIONS DESA/POPULATION DIVISION; STATISTA (DATA: OPEC, IEA); MADDISON PROJECT DATABASE; VERSION 2018 BY JUTTA BOLT, ROBERT INKLAAR, HERMAN DE JONG & JAN LUITEN VAN ZANDEN, LICENSED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 4.0 INTERNATIONAL LICENSE; CENTER FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY; ADAPTED FROM GALLUP POLL, COMPILED BY GERHARD PETERS



**Endangered species**

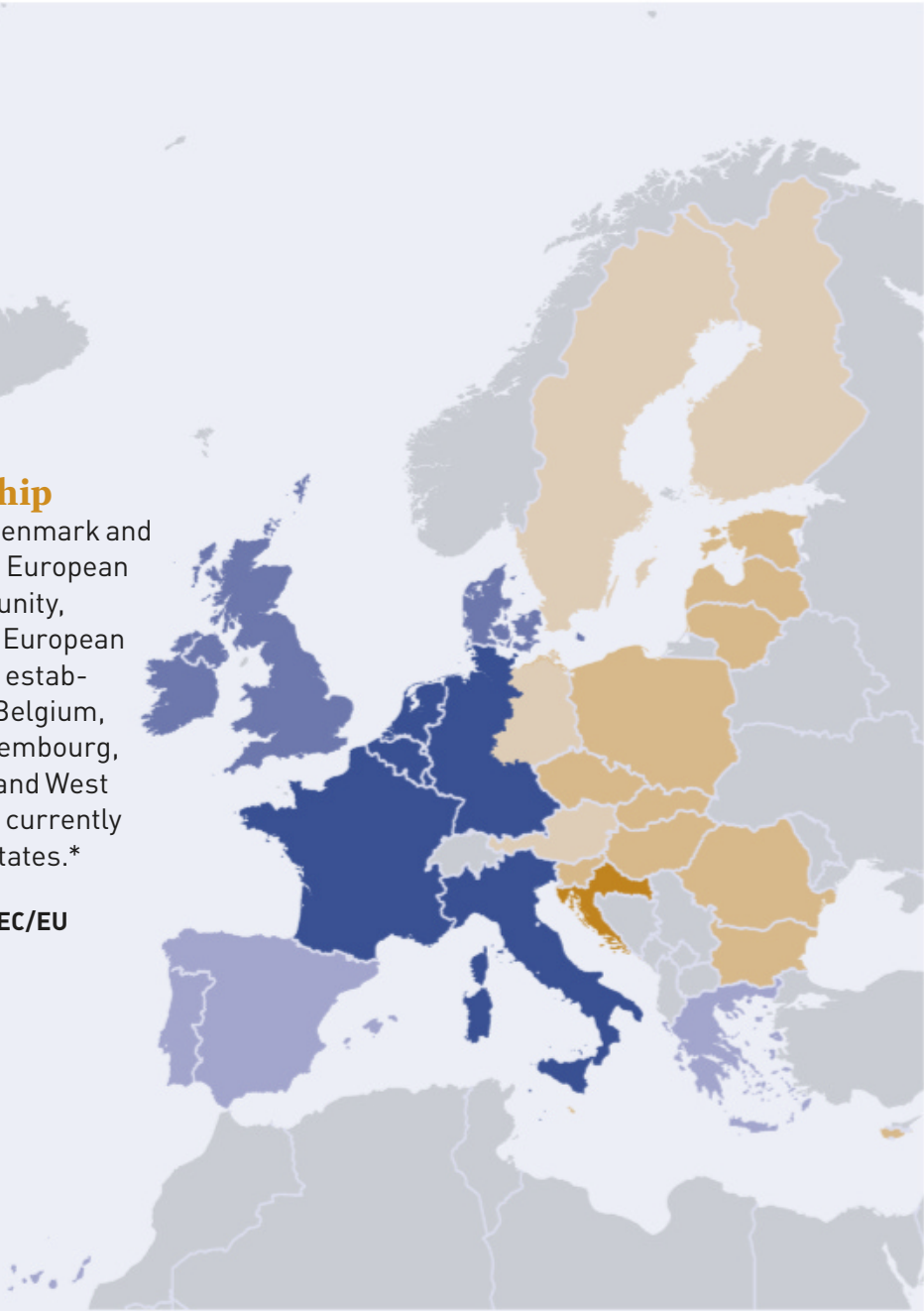
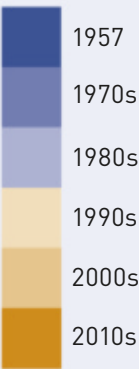
On 28 December 1973, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was signed into US law. One beneficiary of this act is the whooping crane. Following extensive hunting, in 1967 just 60 birds survived. Since critical habitat and nest protection measures were established after the ESA was passed, numbers have soared to around 600.



**EU membership**

In 1973, the UK, Denmark and Ireland joined the European Economic Community, forerunner of the European Union, which was established in 1957 by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. The EU currently has 28 member states.\*

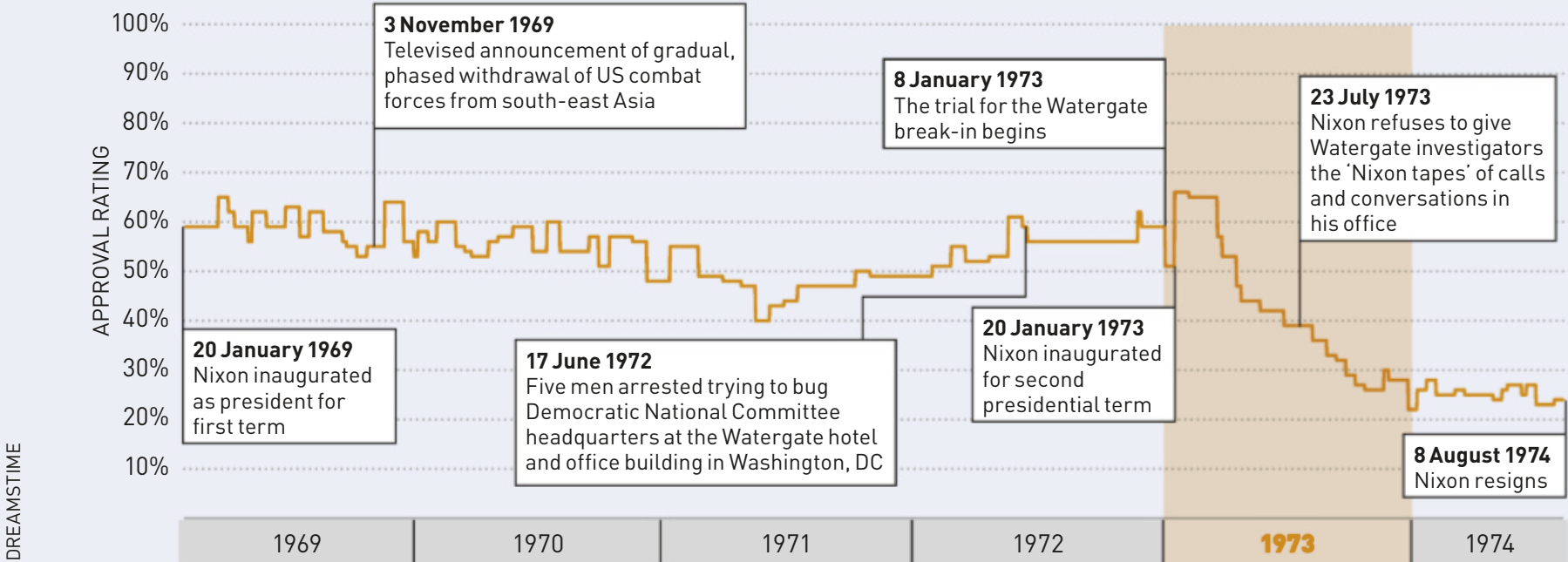
**TIME OF JOINING EEC/EU**



\*At the time of press, the UK is still an EU member

**President Nixon's approval rating**

Approval ratings for President Richard Nixon suffered a spectacular slide during 1973 as the Watergate scandal unfolded. He resigned on 8 August 1974.





7 2 3 8 4

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5

📌 **Number theory**

Representations of digits from (top to bottom) the ninth century, 11th century and the present day. The development of Hindu-Arabic numerals led to developments in maths, science and engineering



1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

9 0

## DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Numbers form the foundation of much of modern life – but not just any digits: it was the evolution of Hindu-Arabic numerals that revolutionised mathematics, astronomy, engineering and science.

**Violet Moller** traces the history of these crucial characters





**I**t is impossible today to imagine a world without what are known as Hindu-Arabic numerals. These nine symbols or digits (1 to 9) and zero (0) – crucially, together with the system of arranging them in place value – are at the very heart of so much of modern life. Without them there would be no computers and no space travel. Indeed, there would be precious little science, technology or medicine of any kind, to say nothing of mathematics itself.

If mathematics is the universal language of science, then Hindu-Arabic numerals and place-value notation are what make that language fluent and indispensable. Each of us uses numbers all of the time, without even thinking about where they came from or what we would do without them. So it may come as a revelation to discover that these numerals were relatively unknown in Europe until the 12th century, and then not widely adopted until well into the 15th century.

Before that era, when Europeans needed to solve a mathematical problem they usually used Roman numerals, which were complicated and unwieldy. Imagine trying to add LIX (59) to VII (7), and you'll quickly understand why maths would not have evolved far as a discipline with that ancient numeric system. The genius of the Hindu-Arabic system lies in its use of positional notation, also known as place-value notation. Each digit can be placed into columns of units, while the decimal point (introduced in the 16th century) can be moved left or right across columns to increase or decrease the value of a number by the power of 10 – a system that made it possible to express fractions with far greater accuracy.

This simple but brilliant idea means that any number can be written using the same nine symbols and zero, allowing for limitless calculations and permutations. Yet, despite this evident power, it was only centuries after these numerals and the system of positional notation were developed that they came into widespread usage.

### The joy of six

Early civilisations developed complex mathematical theories using their own systems. The Babylonians, who emerged from the 19th century BC in the Euphrates valley, developed a sexagesimal system (based around the number 60), the legacy of which survives today in the division of the clock into 60 minutes and seconds. The ancient Greeks used aspects of that sexagesimal system but wrote numbers using letters rather than special characters and, also unlike the Babylonians, used a character to represent zero. Ancient Greek mathematicians were mainly concerned with geometry – lengths, shapes and angles, all labelled using letters rather than numbers – and their ideas had a huge impact on the development of that discipline.

In the early centuries AD, however, a different tradition of mathematics began to flourish in India, probably based on ideas borrowed from Chinese civilisation. Scholars began to

## Try to add LIX to VII and you'll quickly understand why maths would not have evolved far with the Roman numeric system

use nine special digits to represent the first nine numbers and, in around 600 AD, they began writing these characters in order, according to their value.

The final piece of the puzzle was the zero, which is vital to a system of positional notation based on the number 10. It was originally written as a dot, to denote an empty value in a sequence of numbers. Crucially, this system was described around AD 625 by an Indian mathematician named Brahmagupta in an elaborate astronomical treatise, written in Sanskrit poetry, called the *Siddhanta*.

There are divergent accounts of how and when this manuscript arrived in Baghdad, the city founded in 762 by the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur on a bend in the river Tigris as the capital of his burgeoning Muslim empire. One suggests that it was brought directly from India in 773 by a visiting scholar, but it is possible that the Hindu-Arabic numerals were already known in Baghdad by that point. Certainly, they had reached this part of the world some time earlier: in 662, a Syrian priest called Severus Sebokht wrote admiringly of the 'nine signs' of the Indians.

By the early ninth century AD, Baghdad was a major centre of scientific learning presided over by the irrepressibly curious and intelligent Caliph al-Ma'mun. It was also the largest and most important city on Earth, capital of the vast Muslim empire that stretched from the Atlantic coast of Africa to the river Indus, spanning an astonishing five million square miles. People came from across the empire to seek their fortune, and the city became a vibrant centre of learning and culture.

Following the lead of several enlightened caliphs, the elite poured their considerable wealth into creating libraries and funding learning. Scholars flocked to be part of the intellectual endeavour, and manuscripts were brought from across the Middle East and beyond to be translated and the knowledge they held put to use.





### 🕒 Weighty matters

Carvings on the basalt 'Rassam' obelisk, found in Mesopotamia in 1853, show tributes for Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal II (ruled 883–859 BC) being weighed using a sexagesimal system of measures

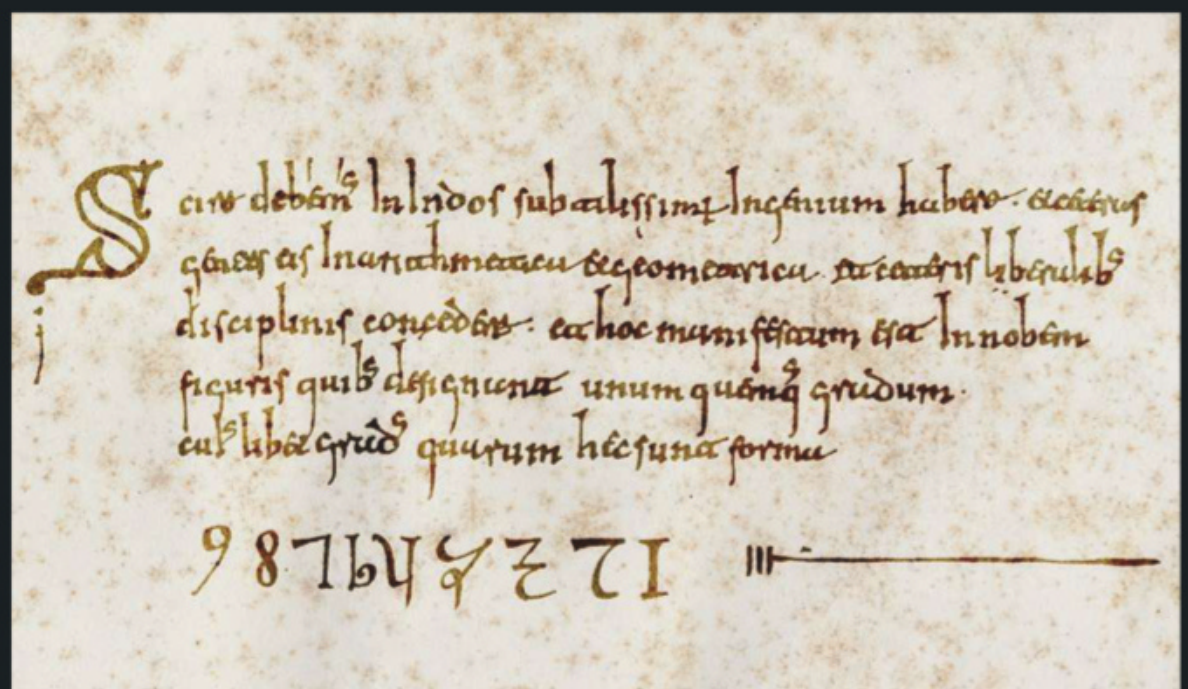


### 📖 Thirst for knowledge

The Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (seated right) sends an envoy to the Byzantine Emperor Theophilos in the ninth century. Al-Ma'mun's capital, Baghdad, was a major centre of learning, attracting scholars including the visionary mathematician al-Khwarizmi

### 🔢 First figures

A page from the *Codex Vigilanus*, a manuscript compiled in Spain in the 10th century, features the earliest known use of Hindu-Arabic numerals in Europe – though without a zero







### Eyes to the skies

Scholars use astronomical instruments in Constantinople, following a tradition established in the early centuries of Baghdad, site of the first observatory in the Muslim world



Astronomy and mathematics were two of the subjects most urgently pursued, and the achievements of the scholars who studied them were truly astonishing. They worked out the Earth's circumference correctly to within a few hundred miles. They built the first observatory in the Muslim world, where they produced data that transformed human understanding of the universe. They translated, corrected and improved ancient Greek scientific theories, combining them with those from India and with their own ideas, propelling knowledge forward.

### Numbers have power

During this intellectual heyday under al-Ma'mun, there were several impressive mathematicians in Baghdad, but the most talented was Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi. His name suggests that his origins lay in the province of Khwarazm, far to the north-east on the shores of the Aral Sea. If that's the case, then he – as with so many of the stars of the Baghdadi intellectual scene – was not Arab but Persian, though he always wrote in Arabic.

Al-Khwarizmi read Brahmagupta's *Siddhanta* and realised that the Hindu-Arabic numerals and place-value system had much more potential than the systems currently used in the Muslim empire, which used finger-reckoning and aspects of the sexagesimal system, and expressed fractions in words instead of numbers. Al-Khwarizmi's *Book on Addition and Subtraction after the Method of the Indians* was the first book in Arabic explaining the Hindu-Arabic system, with a chapter on each of the nine numerals and demonstrations of how to write numbers using the place-value system.

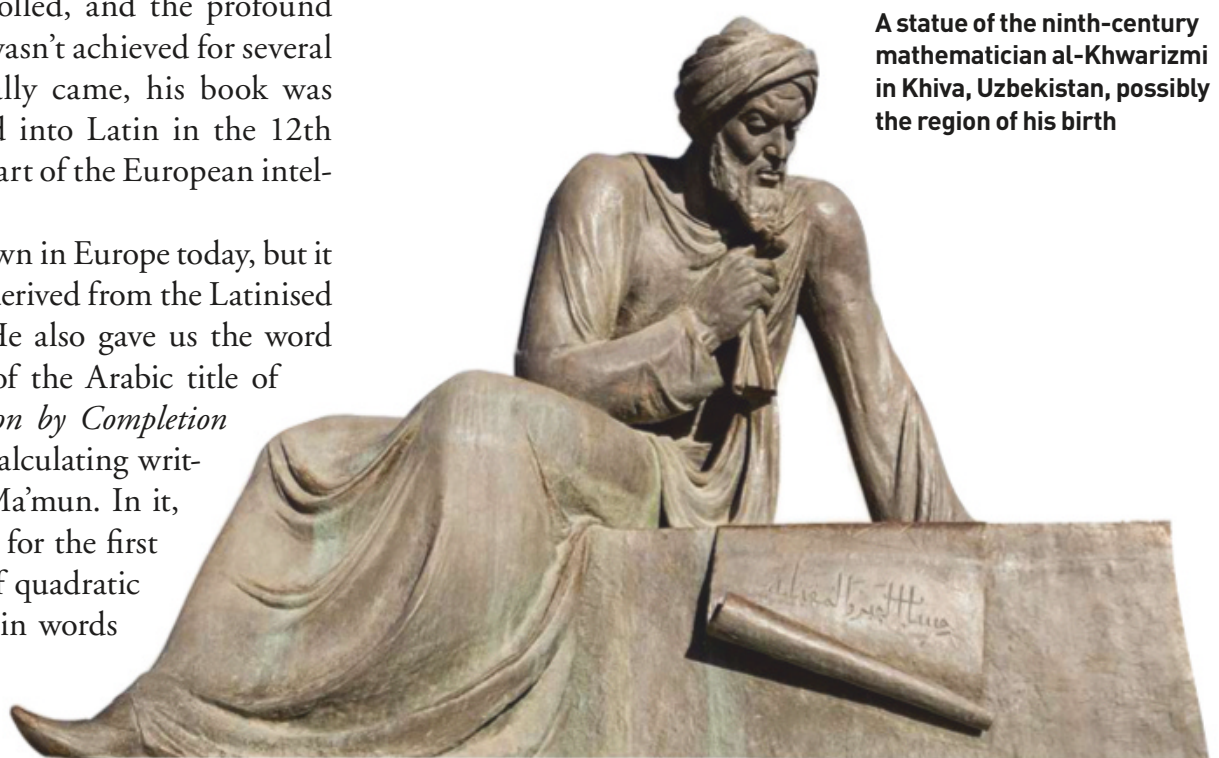
Al-Khwarizmi was a visionary mathematician. Indeed, we would now describe him as an outlier. With the exception of a few scholarly colleagues, no one seemed very interested in the new system of numbers he extolled, and the profound paradigm shift required to adopt it wasn't achieved for several centuries. Yet, when this shift finally came, his book was to play a key role: it was translated into Latin in the 12th century, and became an important part of the European intellectual tradition.

Al-Khwarizmi's name is little known in Europe today, but it has survived in the word algorithm, derived from the Latinised version of his name, 'Algorismus'. He also gave us the word algebra, derived from *al-jabr*, part of the Arabic title of his *Compendious Book on Calculation by Completion and Balancing*, a practical guide to calculating written at the request of the Caliph al-Ma'mun. In it, al-Khwarizmi defined this discipline for the first time by describing different kinds of quadratic equations. Interestingly, he did this in words rather than with the system of notation used in algebra today, which developed during the Renaissance.

Copies of both of al-Khwarizmi's books were taken from Baghdad to other places where they were studied and translated. By the tenth century, they had reached Spain, most of which was under Muslim rule at that time. During the 11th and 12th centuries, Christian forces in the north of the Iberian peninsula began conquering the great cities of al-Andalus. Toledo fell in 1085, and over the following decades European scholars came to the city in search of Arabic books, including texts by al-Khwarizmi, which they translated into Latin.

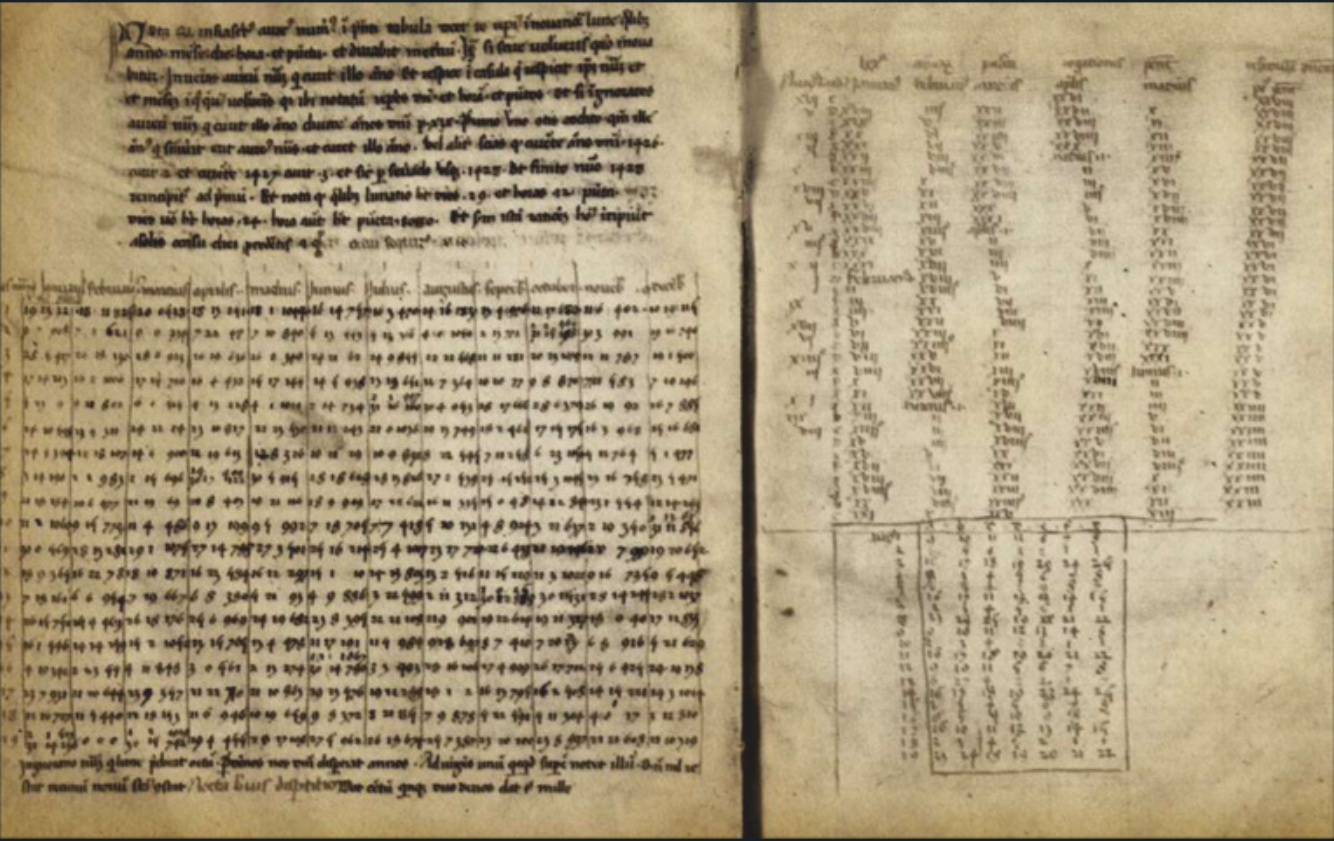
These scholars may have already been acquainted with the forms of the numerals themselves, which were present on a certain type of abacus (counting board) thought to have been introduced by a tenth-century monk named Gerbert (later

## Scholars who flocked to Baghdad worked out the Earth's circumference correctly to within a couple of hundred miles



A statue of the ninth-century mathematician al-Khwarizmi in Khiva, Uzbekistan, possibly the region of his birth





**A numbers game** ➡  
A woodcut from 1503 shows an allegorical scene of a calculation contest in which Pythagoras, using an abacus, is defeated by the Roman philosopher Boethius (left), who uses Hindu-Arabic numerals. From the 15th century, the proliferation of printed books spread the use of that latter system

➡ **Order, order**  
A 14th-century codex collating the works of the Italian scholar Fibonacci, who studied with Muslim mathematicians and later outlined the uses of the place-value system. His work helped to revolutionise trade and accounting in Europe and beyond

Pope Sylvester II) whose talent and passion for mathematics took him to Spain in search of knowledge. Thus the Hindu-Arabic numerals and system of place-value were gradually introduced to Europe. It was a slow process, in part because of resistance from Christians who regarded the numerals as evil and dangerous – simply because they came from the Muslim world.

**Calculated moves**

The most important figure in the transmission of the Hindu-Arabic system to Europe was not Spanish but Italian, and learned the numerals not in Spain but in Africa: Leonardo of Pisa, known today as Fibonacci (though that name was applied to him only from the 19th century). Born around 1170, he was the son of a successful Pisan merchant posted to the chamber of commerce in Bougie (now called Béjaïa, in Algeria) during an era when Pisa was one of the four major Italian mercantile powers – the others being Amalfi, Venice and Genoa – with trade links and settlements across the Mediterranean world.

In Bougie, Arab mathematicians taught the young Pisan the Hindu-Arabic numerals, probably using al-Khwarizmi’s works, and showed him

the brilliance of the place-value system, along with the other wonders of their mathematical tradition.

As a teenager, Fibonacci travelled around the eastern Mediterranean with his father, thereby enjoying opportunities to compare several systems of calculation in use at that time. He quickly recognised the enormous potential of the Hindu-Arabic system to transform learning in the west. In 1202 he wrote a book titled *Liber abbaci* (Book of Calculation). In this book, the first original work in Latin on the subject, he explained the workings of each of the numerals and the method of writing numbers in order according to their value.

By the 1220s, Fibonacci was back in Pisa, and spent time at the court of Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, a man apparently so clever and magnificent that he was nicknamed *Stupor Mundi* – ‘Wonder of the World’. Fibonacci flourished under Frederick’s patronage and in 1228 he produced a revised edition of the *Liber abbaci* with a greater focus on practical application in commerce. It detailed how to work out transactions in different currencies, and how to use different systems of weights and measures – methods that became increasingly important as Europe grew in prosperity and the mercantile world expanded



An 18th-century engraving of mathematician Leonardo of Pisa (c1170–c1245), better known today as Fibonacci





### 🕒 Past times tables

The English natural philosopher Adelard of Bath (c1080–c1152) teaches students using Hindu-Arabic numerals, depicted in an illumination in a medieval manuscript. This renowned scholar was one of the first to introduce the system to Britain

and developed. Merchants needed to be able to carry out complex calculations and record their accounts effectively – something that was made possible by the Hindu-Arabic system of numerals as expounded by Fibonacci.

Fibonacci's initial influence was the introduction of the Hindu-Arabic numerals and the place-value system to people who needed mathematics for practical purposes: merchants, surveyors and architects who used them to carry out the calculations needed in their working lives. The more complex aspects of his writings were taken up later and helped to bring about advances in theoretical mathematics. In the 15th and 16th centuries, scholars began to use the numerals in their exploration of algebra, especially after 1585 when the Flemish mathematician Simon Stevin published an innovative pamphlet on decimal fractions.

The introduction of the decimal point set people thinking in new directions about mathematics, paving the way for alternative concepts such as logarithms, and negative and complex numbers. As usual, there were many practical applications, too: measurement in engineering and surveying, calculation in astronomy and commerce. By this stage, algebraic problems and equations were being written down using digits, symbols and letters, rather than words, enabling scholars to express and compute extremely complex problems.

From the mid-1450s, the printing press – a machine using moveable type that was invented by the German craftsman

Johannes Gutenberg around 1440 – transformed the world of knowledge. As the number of books available grew exponentially, their price fell, making them accessible to many more people. It has been estimated that by 1500, just half a century after printing began in Europe, some 20 million books had been produced. Printing also made texts more standardised, helping to fix the form of the Hindu-Arabic numerals and making them widely recognised and known. At the same time, scholars began translating mathematical texts into vernacular languages (Italian, German, English), bringing the mathematical concepts they contained into the everyday lives of Europeans.

By 1550, very few people in Europe were still using the old Roman numeral system to keep their accounts. The simplicity and elegant brilliance of the Hindu-Arabic system had finally won through, opening up astonishing new avenues in the fields of mathematics and the sciences, forging the world we inhabit today – a world that runs on infinite sequences of numbers.

Codes, algorithms, data: these are the lifeblood of our shiny 21st-century universe and the technological changes seen over the past three decades. It is no coincidence that our name for this phenomenon is the 'digital revolution'. 🌐

**Violet Moller** is a historian and writer. Her latest book is *The Map of Knowledge: How Classical Ideas were Lost and Found – A History in Seven Cities* (Picador, 2019)



# Lata Brandisová (1895–1981)

## PIONEERING FEMALE JOCKEY WHO DEFIED HITLER

The first woman to ride in Europe's toughest steeplechase was also the only one to win it. **Richard Askwith** explores the life of a figurehead for gender equality and democracy

**L**ata Brandisová grew up near Prague in the dying years of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian empire, which at the time encompassed Bohemia. Born Marie Immaculata, the fifth child of an impoverished count, her assumed destiny was to marry a nobleman and bear his children. Instead she became a figurehead – for her gender and her people.

The Brandis family lost its title, along with much of its property, when the democratic First Czechoslovak Republic was declared in 1918. In the aftermath of the First World War, potential husbands were scarce, but Brandisová hadn't been keen on that plan anyway: she was more at ease among horses. Her rapport with the species seemed miraculous. She was also tough, athletic and brave. In short, she had everything it took to be a top-class jockey.

Or almost everything: as a woman, she was not allowed to race. The constitution of Czechoslovakia, whose founder-liberator, Tomáš Masaryk, was an eloquent champion of sexual equality, prohibited discrimination based on gender. Yet the men who ran sport (and most other things) discriminated nonetheless.

It wasn't till 1927 that, backed by her influential cousin, Zdenko Radslav Kinský, Brandisová became the first woman in Czechoslovakia to obtain a one-year jockey's licence. In the face of outraged protests, she mounted one of Kinský's horses to compete in the world's most notoriously dangerous steeplechase: the Velká Pardubická (Grand Pardubice).

With vast jumps exacerbated by miles of stamina-sapping ploughed fields, "the

Devil's race", first run in 1874, often lives up to its nickname. Severe injuries are common, and there has never yet been a year in which every runner finished.

The cavalry officers who dominated the event in the 1920s claimed that they would be dishonoured if they rode against a woman. Brandisová, though, brushed aside their fury to start alongside them – and finished fifth despite a series of painful falls. The public soon warmed to her; the jockeys took longer, but Brandisová returned to Pardubice repeatedly, gradually improving her results. By the mid-1930s, even the officers considered her a national treasure.

By then, though, Masaryk's liberal consensus was unravelling. German nationalists in the Czechoslovak Sudetenland were agitating to join the Reich, and Hitler openly dreamed of crushing the *Untermensch* ('subhuman') Slavs. In the fight for hearts and minds, sport was a crucial battleground: the Nazis used equestrian events at the 1936 Berlin Olympics for propaganda purposes.

Pardubice offered another opportunity to advance the myth of German invincibility; during the 1930s, the annual steeplechase was dominated by the riders of the Reich – Nazi paramilitaries, either SA 'brownshirts' or members of the Equestrian SS (nucleus for the notorious Waffen-SS cavalry division).

The pivotal showdown came in October 1937. By then, the Sudetenland crisis was worsening and the survival of democratic Czechoslovakia was in doubt. In September, two million mourners had packed Prague for the funeral of Tomáš Masaryk. Now his bereaved nation was poised between defiance and despair.

The Reich had sent its strongest-ever team of SS and SA horsemen for the Grand Pardubice. Another humiliation for the local cavalry officers seemed inevitable – but Lata Brandisová, riding a small Kinský mare called Norma, had other ideas. The race was brutal but, against the odds, the 42-year-old noblewoman won. Czech celebrations were tempestuous. So was the rage in Berlin, voiced in virulent anti-Czech rhetoric in the Reichstag. It may or may not have been a coincidence that, within a fortnight, Hitler was stepping up his plans for conquest.

The 1937 Grand Pardubice was the last edition for nearly a decade. The Munich Agreement of September 1938 emasculated Czechoslovakia; six months later, Hitler was in Prague. Brandisová's estate was among the first to be seized by the occupiers. Hungry but defiant, she aided the resistance when she could and, in contrast with many other former nobles, refused to cooperate with the Nazis.

After the war, she reclaimed her property – but the Communists who seized power in 1948 confiscated it again. She spent the last 30 years of her life in a tiny cottage without electricity or running water, hungry and poor. Her sporting achievements were written out of history, and her death in 1981 was barely reported. Yet few women have such a claim to sporting immortality. She refused to take no for an answer, competed against men on equal terms – and achieved something considered to be impossible. 🌐

**Richard Askwith** is the author of *Unbreakable: The Woman Who Defied the Nazis in the World's Most Dangerous Horse Race* (Yellow Jersey, 2019)





### Rider in the storm

Lata Brandisová defied sexist attitudes in her Czechoslovak homeland to compete in the most extreme horse race in Europe – then, in the shadow of invasion, took to the saddle to triumph over Nazi rivals in 1937. In her moment of victory, she recalled, “It seemed to me that never before had people been so truly and amicably united, and that was my greatest and loveliest reward”



In the early months of 1939, victory for Franco's Nationalist forces in the **Spanish Civil War** became inevitable. The elected Republican government began planning peace negotiations – only for a treacherous army commander to derail their hopes for an end to violence. **Paul Preston** reveals how Colonel Segismundo Casado's actions led to tragedy

---

COMPLEMENTS THE BBC RADIO 4 DOCUMENTARY *SPAIN'S LOST GENERATIONS*

---







**Fleeing Franco**

Laden with possessions,  
residents of Barcelona  
trudge north towards the  
French border as  
Nationalist forces bear  
down on the Catalan capital  
in late January 1939





### Farewell to arms

Republican soldiers salute the departing fighters of the International Brigades, the volunteer militia recruited by the Communist International in 1936 and disbanded in 1938

**I**n the last days of January 1939, a shivering column of people tramped north through Catalonia towards the French border, some clutching a few possessions, some carrying infants. The weather was bitterly cold, with sleet and snow falling on the fearful throngs. But waiting for better conditions was not an option: the Nationalist forces of General Francisco Franco were bearing down on Barcelona – and 450,000 terrified women, children, old men and defeated soldiers fled, in anticipation of the horrors he would surely visit on them. Those who could find transport squeezed into any kind of vehicle imaginable, though many were forced to walk 100 miles or more to the border.

Franco's forces took the Catalan capital on 26 January, two and half years after the military uprising against the Republican government that had sparked the Spanish Civil War. And though the refugees undertaking this exodus later dubbed *La Retirada* ('the retreat') posed no military threat, the defeated masses were ruthlessly bombed and strafed by German and Italian aircraft in Franco's service.

It is impossible to calculate how many died on that horrific journey, but those Spaniards who reached France and makeshift internment camps there at least escaped the fate planned for them by Franco. And even after his victory in the north, there

remained a huge area – about one-third of Spain, between Madrid and the Mediterranean – in which thousands of Republicans were left to face the wrath of the ascendant Nationalists.

From the start of the war, Franco had waged a deliberately slow campaign to purge Spain. To guarantee the survival of his future dictatorship he was determined to annihilate as many Republicans as possible, and the occupation of each section of conquered Republican territory was followed by a savage repression. What followed the fall of Barcelona was more horrifying even than the atrocities that had gone before.

This is the story of the last days of the Spanish Republic, of the final two months of the war – and of an avoidable humanitarian tragedy that cost many thousands of lives and ruined thousands more. Of the many protagonists in the conflict, this story centres on three individuals, key players in the Republican cause. One, Dr Juan Negrín ❶ (see the box on page 60) – the prime minister of the Republic – tried desperately to prevent the tragedy. The other two bore responsibility for what transpired. Professor Julián Besteiro ❷ behaved with culpable naivety, while Colonel Segismundo Casado ❸ – commander of the Republican Army of the Centre – acted with a shocking combination of cynicism, arrogance and selfishness.

On 5 March 1939, just over five weeks after Franco took Barcelona, Casado launched a military coup against Negrín's





Spanish women cast ballots in 1933, having gained the right to vote only two years earlier after the foundation of the Second Republic

government. Over the next 25 days, his junta engaged in a mini-civil war, botched evacuations and ensured that the Republican fight would end in disaster.

After the fall of Catalonia, Negrín knew that the Republic was defeated. Aware that surrender would facilitate the terrible repression planned by Franco, he pursued a strategy based on sustaining Republican resistance. His hoped-for scenario was that European war would break out and that the western Allies – which, while recognising the Republican government, had followed a policy of non-intervention in Spain – would recognise that the cause of the Republic was theirs. At worst, he planned to arrange the evacuation of those most at risk.

### No surrender

Aware that Franco would reject an armistice, Negrín refused to consider unconditional surrender. On 7 August 1938, he said to a friend: “I will not hand over hundreds of defenceless Spaniards who are fighting heroically for the Republic so that Franco can have the pleasure of shooting them as he has done in his own Galicia, in Andalusia, in the Basque country and all those places where the hooves of Attila’s horse have left their mark.”

The biggest problem facing Negrín was war-weariness. Ordinary people had endured incredible hardship, yet continued fighting to support the Republic that had given them so

## The Spanish Civil War: overview of a tragedy

In April 1931, following the end a period of nationalist dictatorship, elections brought widespread urban power to Republicans, King Alfonso XIII left Spain and the Spanish Second Republic was established. With a host of republican, socialist, conservative Christian and, increasingly, fascist factions vying for power, fragile alliances formed a series of governments. A significant element within the rightwing movement was the **Falange**, an extreme nationalist political group calling for military rule and imperial expansion, founded in 1933.

On 17 July 1936, a **military uprising** against the Republican government was launched by a group of Nationalist officers including **General Francisco Franco**. The Nationalist military forces enjoyed initial successes in the Spanish protectorate of Morocco, Galicia, Old Castile, Navarra and parts of Andalusia. However, large areas remained loyal to the Republican government, including much of the centre and east, notably the Basque Country and Catalonia, which had been promised autonomy. The country became embroiled in a vicious civil war between broadly rightwing Nationalists and the leftists who supported the elected Republican government.

**The Nationalist faction** – which included many different movements with a broadly rightwing, anti-communist, pro-clerical slant – was backed by Nazi Germany and Italy, while **the Republican cause** was supported by the Soviet Union, Mexico and tens of thousands of non-Spanish anti-fascist fighters who joined the International Brigades.

Over the following years, the Nationalists gained ground, first taking the north coast and south-west, overwhelming Catalonia in a rapid campaign from December 1938, and taking Madrid – which had been besieged for over two years – on 28 March 1939. By the end of March, they controlled all territory in Spain.

The conflict was marked by atrocities by both sides; after Nationalist victory, Franco launched reprisals against his former enemies, including the use of forced labour and **large-scale executions of Republicans**, hundreds of thousands of whom fled abroad. The total death toll of the war (including executions and bombardment as well as battle) is much debated, but was probably between 500,000 and 600,000. Franco ruled Spain as military dictator till his death in 1975, proclaiming as heir Prince Juan Carlos de Borbón, grandson of Alfonso XIII, who succeeded as King Juan Carlos and began the transition back to democracy.





## General Miaja described Casado as “four-faced”, because to call him ‘two-faced’ would barely reflect the reality

much in terms of women’s rights, social and educational reform and regional autonomy. However, extreme privation was taking its toll. Families had lost their menfolk, who had been killed or maimed. With each Francoist victory, tens of thousands of men were imprisoned in concentration camps, and more men – older and younger than before – were being conscripted. Acute hunger was exacerbated by the hundreds of thousands of refugees packed into Republican towns that had already become demoralised by intense bombing raids.

Casado exploited this widespread desperation, and garnered the cooperation of influential socialist intellectual Julián Besteiro. Together with several prominent anarchists and the socialist trade union leader Wenceslao Carrillo ④, they formed the anti-Negrín National Defence Council, under the nominal presidency of the army commander-in-chief, General José Miaja ⑤. Casado claimed that his motive was to end unnecessary slaughter. To secure support, he engaged in a massive deceit, making contradictory offers to the different groups who backed his plans.

At the heart of the deception lay the links of both Casado and Besteiro to the Francoist ‘fifth column’ – Nationalist elements within Republican strongholds, working to undermine the war effort through sabotage, propaganda and other tactics. In fact, treachery and sabotage were always a long-term problem for the Republic, partly because the loyalty of many officers was



Nationalist leader (and later military dictator) General Francisco Franco, pictured during the battle of the Ebro in late 1938

geographical: they continued to serve Republican forces because the Republicans happened to retain power in their location, rather than through political inclination, which in many cases opposed the ruling power. For instance, during the key battle of the Ebro (25 July–16 November 1938) and the defence of Catalonia from late December 1938, Miaja and his chief of staff, General Manuel Matallana Gómez, blocked diversionary attacks to impede Franco’s forces.

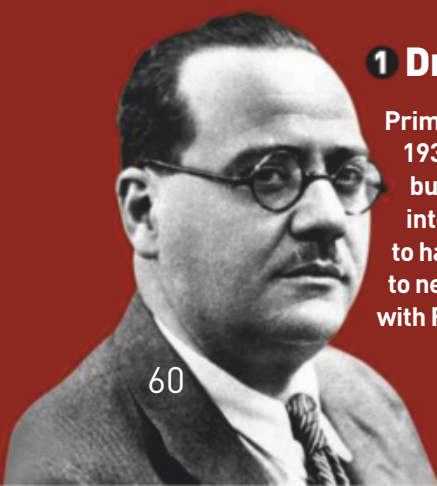
The many fifth columnists on Casado’s staff included his brother César and his personal physician, Dr Diego Medina. His adjutant, Colonel José Centaño, belonged to Franco’s secret service. Of the different promises made to the various elements that made up his junta, the most extravagant – though he seems to have believed them himself – were those made to fellow officers that Franco would respect their pensions and possibly incorporate them into his post-war army.

### Anarchist support

To some socialists, Casado offered peace and the delights of humiliating Negrín, whom they had never forgiven for replacing Francisco Largo Caballero as prime minister in May 1937. The most substantial support garnered by Casado, though, was among the anarchists, to whom he promised a more violent war effort. They were blinded to the intentions of both Franco and Casado by their resentment of the Communist Party (PCE) and of Negrín for blocking their revolutionary ambitions and imposing a centralised war effort. They blamed them for every military reverse from the time of the Ebro retreat onwards, thereby ignoring the international situation and the extent to

## Actors in the endgame

*Six Republican political and military leaders with key roles in the final months of the war*



### ① Dr Juan Negrín

Prime minister from May 1937, Negrín attempted but failed to obtain international mediation to halt the war. His plans to negotiate a peace deal with Franco also failed.

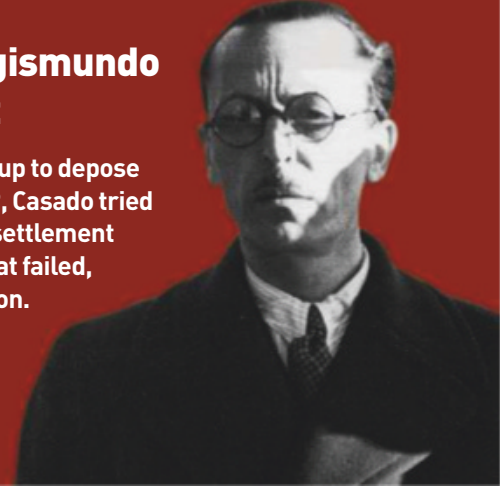
### ② Professor Julián Besteiro

Socialist politician who, hoping to bring peace, allied with Casado to bring down Negrín’s government.



### ③ Colonel Segismundo Casado López

Having launched a coup to depose Negrín in March 1939, Casado tried to negotiate a peace settlement with Franco; when that failed, his junta fled to London.







### Under guard

Nationalist troops guard captured Republican militia in September 1936. Many soldiers (and civilians) captured by both sides in the conflict were subjected to violent atrocities

which the war effort had been undermined by the sabotage of professional officers – and, indeed, by the activities of extremists within the anarchist movement.

Casado's mendacity was equalled only by his egomania. He told Dr Medina that he would astound the world, claiming: "The surrender will take place in a way for which there is no precedent in history." Later, in exile, Casado claimed that he had intended to be the *redentor* (redeemer) of Spain. The Republic's senior military strategist, General Vicente Rojo, commented: "He [Casado] is the most political and most crooked and fainthearted of the career officers in the Republican ranks." Even General Miaja referred to Casado privately as "four-faced", because to call him 'two-faced' would barely reflect the reality.

On 20 February, agents of the Nationalist intelligence service SIPM gave Casado a document listing Franco's 'concessions'. "NATIONALIST SPAIN demands surrender," it read; it did not offer what Casado claimed to his comrades, but instead effectively outlined the imminent repression. It promised to spare the lives of those who surrendered their weapons and were not guilty of murders or other serious crimes, but stated that they would be imprisoned for "the time necessary for their correction and re-education". Casado was delighted, crowing: "Magnificent,

magnificent!", and told the SIPM agents that he could organise the surrender of the Republican army "in about two weeks".

When the coup was announced on 5 March, the deceptions were revealed in the statements of the junta's members who were either deluded or lying; in fact, none of Casado's 'cabinet' had the unanimous support of the organisations that they claimed to represent. The defeated in Catalonia were accused of desertion. It was claimed that Negrín was in France, when in fact he was with his government in Alicante, trying to organise the war effort. Casado's manifesto asserted that: "Not one of the men who are here will leave Spain until everyone who wants to has left, not just those who can." Casado addressed Franco: "In your hands, not in ours, is peace or war" – and effectively ended any possibility of a negotiated peace.

The first initiative taken by Casado's fellow conspirators guaranteed subsequent disaster. While fifth columnists and Falangists fought with Republican forces for control of the naval base at Cartagena, far south-east Spain, the head of the Republican navy, Admiral Miguel Buiza 6, took the fleet out to sea to pressure Negrín into surrendering to the junta; Buiza was in cahoots with Casado, and the majority of his officers were pro-Francoists.

GETTY IMAGES/AKG/ALAMY



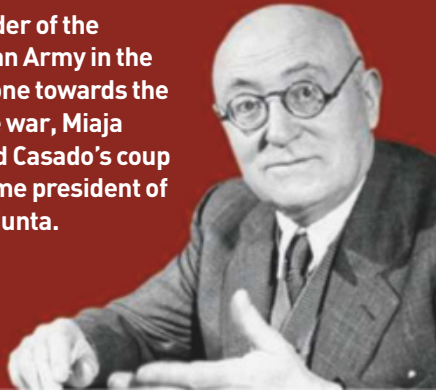
### 4 Wenceslao Carrillo

Socialist trade-union leader who supported Casado in forming the anti-Negrín National Defence Council, sparking a government rift.



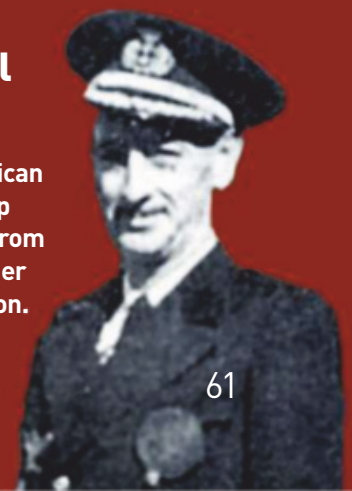
### 5 General José Miaja

Commander of the Republican Army in the central zone towards the end of the war, Miaja supported Casado's coup and became president of Casado's junta.



### 6 Admiral Miguel Buiza

Commander of the Republican Navy. During Casado's coup Buiza evacuated the fleet from Cartagena to Tunisia, further weakening Negrín's position.







### **Barcelona fallen**

Nationalist forces drive armoured vehicles through Barcelona following the fall of the city to Franco's troops on 26 January 1939

The warships cast off at midday on 5 March, hours before the coup was launched by Casado, who telegraphed congratulations to Buiza and signed off as 'President Casado'. Once at sea, a majority of Buiza's staff opposed returning to Cartagena, and instead sailed across the Mediterranean to Bizerte, Tunisia; there the fleet was handed over to the French authorities, who later surrendered it to Franco.

### **Shattered hopes**

Buiza's decision was a devastating blow for Negrín: without the fleet there would be no security for an evacuation. Admiral Cervera, commander of Franco's navy, imposed a total blockade to prevent any merchant ships entering the Republic's remaining ports. Any hopes of an evacuation were also shattered.

When Casado telephoned Negrín and announced his coup, the prime minister offered to negotiate and formally to hand over power. Casado rudely dismissed the offer, and declared the government to be illegal. However, without a formal transfer of powers, Casado's junta would be even more illegal, and would receive no international recognition. Rejecting Negrín's offer meant renouncing access both to government funds held outside Spain and to diplomatic links with other countries, and reflected Casado's (and Besteiro's) overriding urge to humiliate Negrín.

Casado threatened to arrest and shoot the prime minister and his cabinet, and the devastated Negrín made the decision for the government to go into exile. His final declaration pointed out

## **Casado and his ministers ensured their own escape but did nothing to arrange mass evacuation**

that there was no fundamental discrepancy between the junta's proclaimed objectives and the government's commitment to a peace settlement without reprisals.

Casado's rejection of Negrín's peace overtures – his offer to negotiate with Franco and hand over power to Casado – opened the way to the mini-civil war that Negrín had hoped to prevent, and exposed the utterly naive expectations of the conspirators. In contrast, Negrín was fully aware of the consequences of unconditional surrender. He had witnessed the horrors experienced by the defeated Republicans in France; those refugees had encountered humiliation, but not the trials, torture, imprisonment and executions planned by Franco for those who surrendered.

Casado then attacked the Communists in Madrid, intending to use them as bargaining chips to be offered to Franco in exchange for concessions. After six days of fighting (during which Franco granted a temporary truce to facilitate Casado's

GETTY IMAGES





**A young girl rests during the evacuation of Barcelona in the last days of January 1939, as Franco's forces approached the city**



**People watch Nationalist aircraft during an air raid on Barcelona in January 1939. The city was heavily bombed**

victory), the Communists were defeated. This marked the end of the Republic's cause: the coup, the loss of the fleet and finally the elimination of the Communists removed the most powerful cards that could be used by the Republic in any negotiations with Franco.

Following his exile to Paris, Negrín continued to use government resources to keep the remaining Republican-held centre zone supplied with food and equipment. He had chartered ships to evacuate the tens of thousands fleeing the Francoist advances, but the blockade prevented them from docking in Valencia and Alicante to pick up the evacuees.

In contrast, Casado and his ministers ensured their own escape but did nothing to arrange mass evacuation. Much was needed: as well as merchant ships to carry the evacuees and a fleet to escort them through the Francoist blockade, transport to the coast was required for those most at risk. Passports had to be prepared, along with arrangements for political asylum, and foreign currency obtained. As the British consul in Valencia reported to his country's Foreign Office, the junta's preparations for evacuation "were a shining example of vagueness, muddle, vacillation".

Julián Besteiro, who was named vice-president of the junta, had been introduced to Casado by agents of the fifth column in October 1938. He swallowed the myths they fed him about Franco's clemency, and was convinced that a victorious Franco would embrace the defeated Republican masses. Accordingly, he prevented any government resources being used to finance

evacuation, claiming that national wealth was needed for post-war reconstruction, and that Franco would treat those who stayed behind much better for having safeguarded resources.

Besteiro's delusions that there was nothing to fear from Franco saw him remain in Madrid while Casado and the other members of the Junta left for Valencia on 28 March. There, Casado told an international relief delegation that Franco had agreed to allow a period of one month in which to organise evacuation, and that he had ships for 10,000 refugees. Later that day, he admitted that he had no ships and that Franco would take over in three days at most. He also told the delegation that Alicante was the best port from which they might organise an evacuation.

Shortly before leaving Valencia, Casado made a radio broadcast at the request of the Falange – the Spanish fascist party that supplied much of the rank and file of the Nationalist forces – calling for calm and claiming to have secured "an honourable peace without bloodshed". Meanwhile, tens of thousands of desperate men, women and children fled from Madrid on 28 March 1939, pursued by Falangists. They headed for Valencia and Alicante, where Casado had promised there would be ships. The last boats to leave were the British steamers *Stanbrook*, *Maritime*, *Ronwyn* and *African Trader*. They carried 5,146 passengers in total; the *Stanbrook*, one of the ships chartered by Negrín, left Alicante precariously overcrowded with 2,638 refugees. Many smaller vessels – fishing boats and pleasure craft – also made the hazardous journey across the Mediterranean to Algeria.





### Overloaded ark

The British coal ship *Stanbrook* arrives in Oran, French-administered Algeria, carrying 2,638 Republican refugees at the end of the Spanish Civil War

## For six days, 45,000 men were kept virtually without food or water in Alicante, exposed to the wind and rain

Over the next few days, thousands of refugees from all over Republican territory gathered in Valencia and Alicante. Some vessels approached the ports but, fearful of interception by the Francoist navy, their captains turned back. In Alicante, the refugees waited in vain for three and a half days without food or water. Many committed suicide. Children died of exhaustion and malnutrition.

At the end of that time, two ships carrying Francoist troops arrived, and those soldiers violently separated families; any who protested were beaten or shot. Women and children were taken to Alicante, where they were kept for a month in a cinema with little food and no hygiene facilities. The men were herded into the bullring in Alicante or in a large open field outside the town known as the Campo de Los Almendros. For six days, 45,000 men were kept virtually without food or water, sleeping in mud in the open, exposed to the wind and the rain. They were given miniscule rations on just two occasions.

In contrast, Casado and his cronies went to Gandía, about 60km south of Valencia, where Franco had arranged special treatment for them. The port was in the hands of Falangists, who provided refreshments while the junta awaited embarkation on a British warship.

### Shattered hopes

Franco's forces could now advance unopposed, and they took Madrid on 28 March. City after city fell bloodlessly. By 31 March, all of Spain was in Nationalist hands. The bravado of anarchists who had boasted of scorched earth and suicide squads came to nothing.

In privileged exile in London, working for the BBC, Casado never showed any regret or remorse for the actions that had precipitated the collapse of the Republic in the worst imaginable circumstances. In 1961, he returned to Spain, where he was handsomely paid for memoirs published in newspapers and in book form. No mention was made of his dealings with the fifth column and Franco's intelligence services. Negrín, though, was principally concerned with the welfare of the exiles. He arranged for funds to help more than ten thousand Republican refugees travel to and settle in Mexico. When the exiles reached the port of Veracruz in Mexico, the side of the ship carried a huge banner that read 'Negrín was right'. 🌐

**Paul Preston** is Príncipe de Asturias Professor of Contemporary Spanish Studies at the London School of Economics. His books include *The Last Days of the Spanish Republic* (William Collins, 2016)



# In search of the missing



*A BBC Radio 4 series, Spain's Lost Generations, looks at the ongoing legacy of Spain's civil war and dictatorship. Matt Elton spoke to its presenter, Lucas Laursen (left)*

## Which groups of people does this series deal with, and what happened to them?

Our series deals with people killed or otherwise disappeared during the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship. More than 100,000 men and women are still missing. One episode focuses on people executed by Franco's regime, and on the families who are only in the past decade or so recovering those remains from mass graves. The other is about people affected by the state-initiated theft of babies, which started during the war and continued through the early years of democracy. In some cases these people are now beginning to recover their identities and their families.

## How did you find out about their stories?

Thanks to a growing civil society movement that began in the early 2000s, more Spaniards are learning where their lost loved ones are buried – or, in the case of some stolen babies, where they are now living. More than 8,000 bodies have been recovered from mass graves since the first exhumation in 2000, and we followed several families we met via those organisations through different stages of their journeys of recovery.

We recorded at a ceremony in Guadalajara, during which the organisation returned the remains of 22 people to living relatives. Unfortunately, I know of far fewer reunions of families with stolen babies, but we tried to follow some of those threads, too, and I suspect we'll hear about more those in the future.

## Are there any cases you found particularly striking or moving?

The most moving moments for me came when I met people who had lost family members. Some had been children during the war, while others had lost babies at the same Madrid hospital where my daughter was born. Meeting these people in person helped me experience how the



## Fate uncovered

The remains of 22 people, killed by Nationalists after the Spanish Civil War and found in a mass grave in Guadalajara, are returned to their families in 2018

human toll of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship and the healing it needs are still unfinished.

## What do these stories tell us about the wider legacy of the civil war?

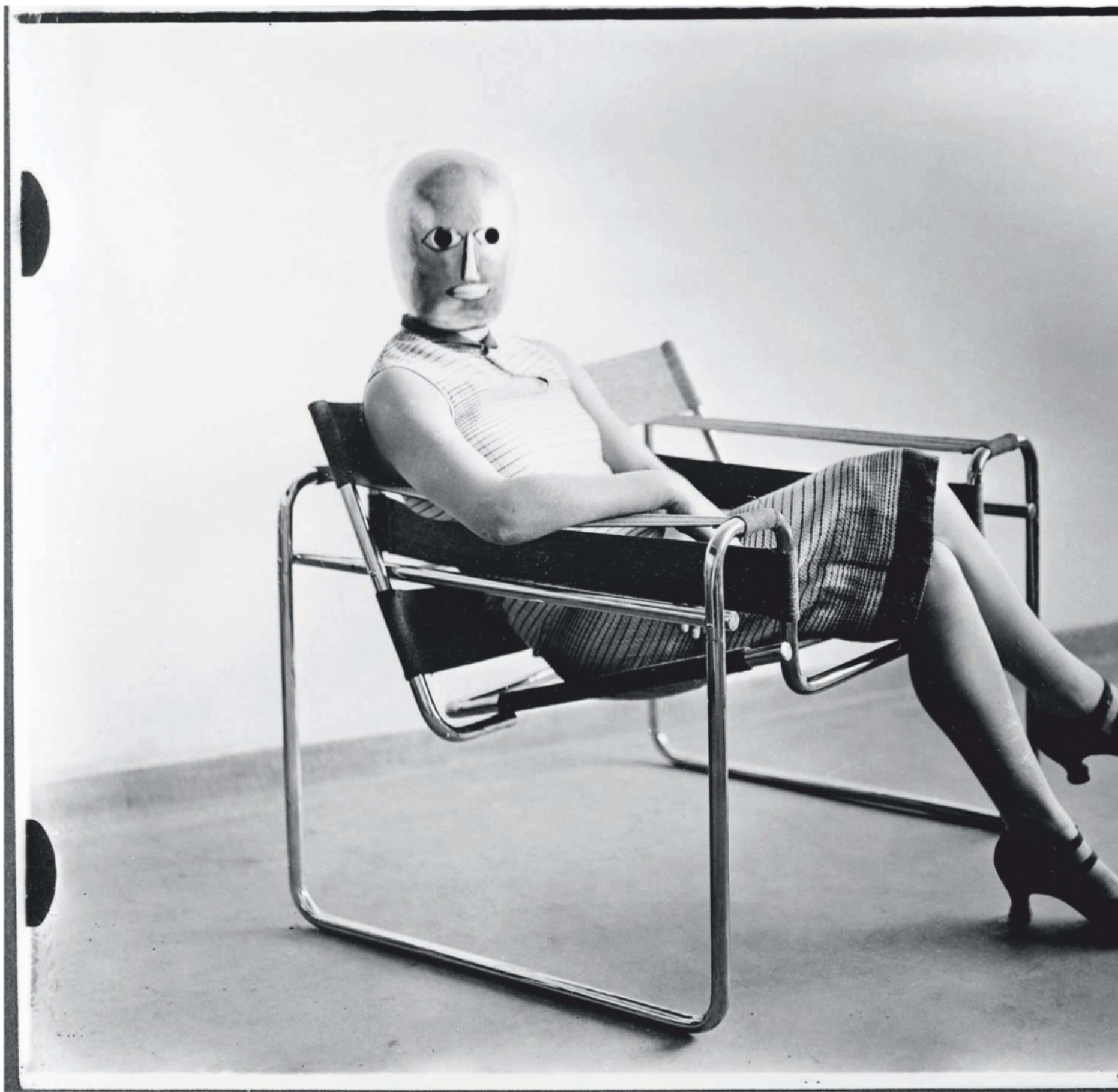
I hope listeners will hear just how unfinished that business is. We spoke with government bureaucrats and policymakers, activists and legal experts, each with their own prescription for healing. The generation of people doing the recovering isn't composed of those who survived the war or lived under the dictatorship, but the generation afterwards. That taught me something about how slow people are to overcome fear, and how slow democracies are to take root. Perhaps, after hearing these voices, listeners will have their own ideas about what it takes to mend a rift like Spain's – and how important it is to avoid them in the first place. 🌐

“More than 8,000 bodies have been recovered from mass graves, and we followed several families through the journey of recovery”

## DISCOVER MORE

Listen to the new two-part documentary **Spain's Lost Generations**, now available on catch-up at [bbc.co.uk/radio4](http://bbc.co.uk/radio4)





🕒 **Sitting figure with mask, c1926**

This photograph, reproduced in numerous publications and on album covers, is a synthesis of the most important Bauhaus workshops: furniture, textiles, metal, stage design and photography. The composition of the fashion-conscious young woman wearing a short-skirted dress by Lis Beyer-Volger and mask by Oskar Schlemmer, sitting in Marcel Breuer's B3 chair, reflects the school's style, humour and youth. This piece, and others in this feature, will be displayed at the centenary 'original bauhaus' exhibition of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung at the Berlinische Galerie.





# design icons

As the Bauhaus school marks its centenary, historian and curator **Nina Wiedemeyer** introduces some of the influential art movement's most important works

---

COMPLEMENTS THE  
BBC FOUR **BAUHAUS SEASON**

---





The **Bauhaus** was a lively school of ideas and experiments in fine arts, crafts, architecture and design. Operating between 1919 and 1933, it was located first in **Weimar**, then **Dessau** and finally **Berlin**, but its ideas transcended these places and its short lifespan. One of the main objectives of the Bauhaus was to **unify the fine arts, craft and technology**. Students learned the basic elements and principles of design and colour theory and experimented with a range of materials and processes in the *Vorkurs* (foundation course), before joining specialised **workshops** in sculpture, carpentry, printing, weaving, metalwork or photography.

**Cosmopolitan in spirit** and open to international artistic diversity, the Bauhaus was a magnet for the European avant-garde under its **founder-director Walter Gropius** in Weimar, but enjoyed its heyday from 1925 in Dessau. The Weimar masters Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, László Moholy-Nagy, Georg Muche and Oskar Schlemmer followed Gropius to Dessau and moved into the Masters' Houses that he had designed. Hannes Meyer took over as director in 1928, followed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in 1930. Due to **pressure from the Nazi party**, the Bauhaus moved briefly to Berlin in 1932 and was forced to close in 1933. It continues to exert a powerful **influence** on art, graphic design, architecture, interior design and industrial design to this day.

➔ **Infuser teapot, c1924**

This teapot is one of seven hammered by hand by Marianne Brandt, the only female member of the Bauhaus metal workshop. They were created as part of the school's system of dual apprenticeship: one part craftsmanship, one part artistic expression. Initially intended to be prototypes for industrial production, they have instead remained unique originals, held in different collections all over the world; one is now in the British Museum, London. All seven teapots will be on display together for the first time at the 'original bauhaus' exhibition.

⬇ **Campus postcard, 1927**

This postcard, annotated by a proud student before sending it to his mother, depicts the Bauhaus campus in Dessau. Opened in 1926 after the school moved from Weimar as a result of pressure from that city's conservative regime, the building has no central entrance, meaning that there is no 'front view' of the unconventional campus. This photograph by Lucia Moholy, who extensively documented life and work at the Bauhaus, became one of the most popular views of the campus. Its use on a postcard reflects the way in which the Bauhaus school used contemporary media to present itself as truly a modern institution.







### 🔹 Breuer B3 chair, c1925

Through countless reproductions, Marcel Breuer's tubular steel B3 (or Wassily) chair has become a true design classic. Before discovering tubular steel, which became his signature structural material, Breuer designed chunky expressionist furniture made of solid wood with carved ornaments. Tubular steel had already been used in furniture design – for example, in hospital furniture, because of its hygienic properties – but Breuer emphasised the beauty of the material. The high manufacturing costs of tubular steel proscribed mass production, so Breuer's original chairs remain exclusive, rare masterpieces.

MARCEL BREUER, BAUHAUS-ARCHIV BERLIN, FOTOSTUDIO BARTSCH/ MARIANNE BRANDT, BRITISH MUSEUM © DACS 2019







### 📍 Triadic Ballet, premiered 1922

Conceived by the painter and sculptor Oskar Schlemmer before he joined the Bauhaus, the *Triadic Ballet* was first performed in 1922 and is still being reimagined today. Schlemmer's aesthetics, dominated by geometric forms, broke with all traditions and inspired countless artists and pop stars, from David Bowie to Lady Gaga. Despite its radical innovations in costume and staging, the *Triadic Ballet* is a riff on the age-old 'boy meets girl' story, and it is this combination of familiar and completely novel that makes it such a perfect source for pop culture.

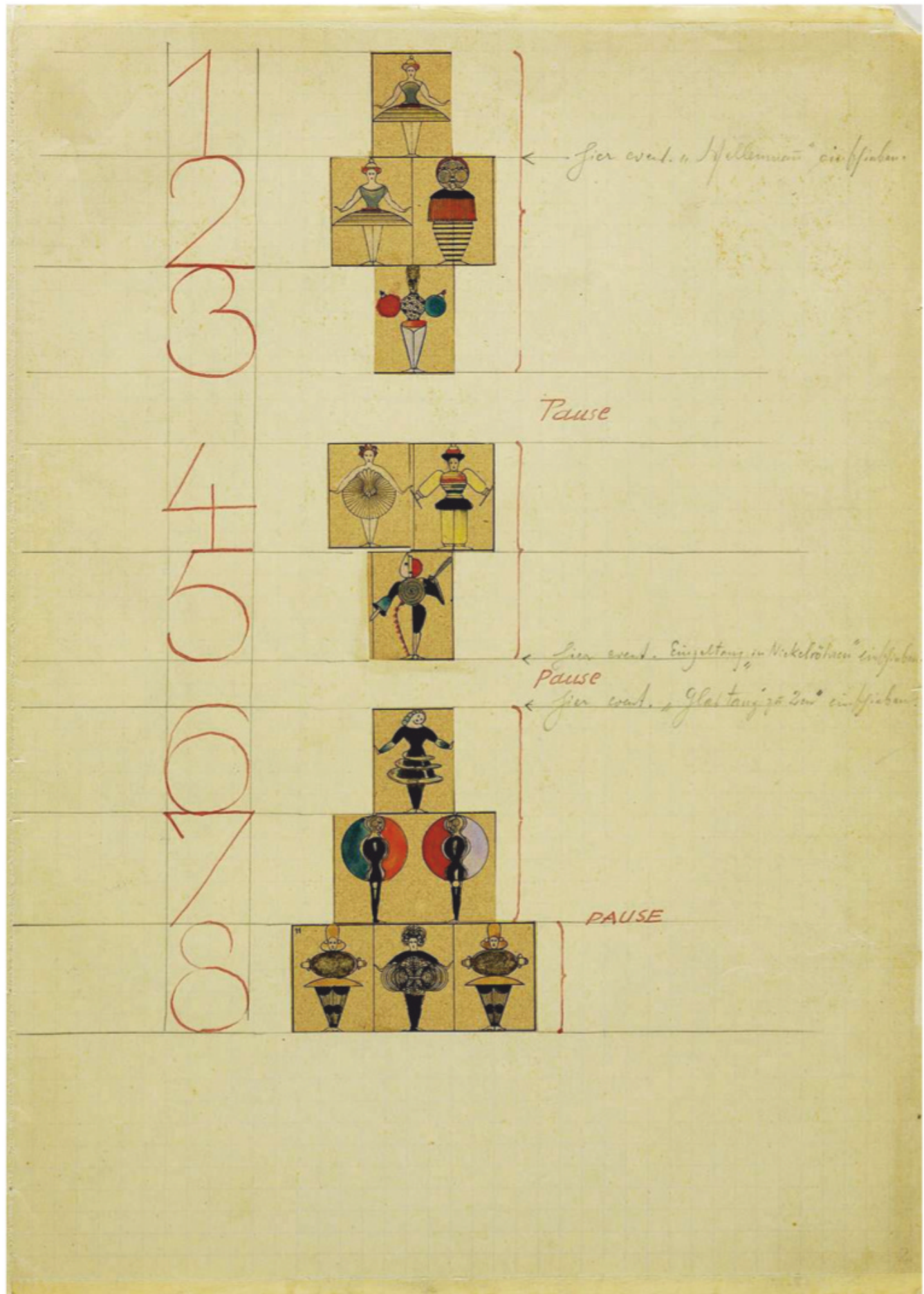




OSKAR SCHLEMMER, 1927. BAUHAUS-ARCHIV  
BERLIN, FOTO: MARKUS HAWLIK

### 🕒 Triadic Ballet, structure sketch, c1926

Schlemmer's ballet comprised a trinity of music, costume and dance, with three acts, three dancers, three moods (cheerful burlesque, ceremonious and solemn, and mystical fantasy). The original version consisted of 12 dances, but after a 1926 performance, conductor Hermann Scherchen was asked to compose a percussion piece for eight dances. For that purpose, Schlemmer created this sketch depicting the characters and their costumes in their various solo dances, duets and the final trio.







### 📌 Bachelor's wardrobe on castors, 1930

This piece by Bauhaus student Josef Pohl is a prototype multi-functional, space-saving piece of furniture for a single household. He presented his design at a touring Bauhaus exhibition, but it never progressed to the production stage. It still feels modern: the free-standing wardrobe made of light wood veneer embodies mobility and flexibility, minimalist living and simplicity. This plain-looking box with skilfully arranged storage spaces accommodated the entire wardrobe of a man of Pohl's time, from jackets, shirts and trousers to shoes and ties.

### Nina Wiedemeyer

is an art historian and author, and the curator of 'original bauhaus'

### DISCOVER MORE

**original bauhaus**, the centenary exhibition of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung at the Berlinische Galerie, runs from 6 Sept 2019 to 27 Jan 2020  
[bauhaus.de](http://bauhaus.de)

Look out for BBC Four's **Bauhaus season** this spring – for more details, see page 96





# BBC World Histories

## → CONTACT US

**Website** [historyextra.com/worldhistories](http://historyextra.com/worldhistories)

**Twitter** [twitter.com/historyextra](https://twitter.com/historyextra)

**Facebook** [facebook.com/historyextra](https://facebook.com/historyextra)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

**Email** [bbcworldhistories@buysubscriptions.com](mailto:bbcworldhistories@buysubscriptions.com)

**Phone: UK** 03330 160 708 **Overseas** +44 1604 212832

**Post: UK** FREEPOST IMMEDIATE MEDIA

**Overseas** *BBC World Histories*, PO BOX 3320,  
3 Queensbridge, Northampton, NN4 7BF, UK

## EDITORIAL

**Email** [worldhistories@historyextra.com](mailto:worldhistories@historyextra.com)

**Phone** +44 117 314 7377

**Post** *BBC World Histories*, Immediate Media Company  
Bristol Limited, Tower House, Fairfax Street,  
Bristol BS1 3BN, UK



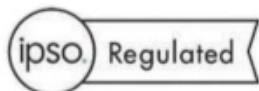
**SUBSCRIBE  
TODAY**

→ PAGE 24

**IMMEDIATE  
MEDIA**<sup>CO</sup>

© Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited, 2019 – ISSN: 1469 8552.  
Not for resale. All rights reserved. Unauthorised reproduction in whole  
or part is prohibited without written permission. Every effort has been  
made to secure permission for copyright material. In the event of any  
material being used inadvertently, or where it proved impossible to trace  
the copyright owner, acknowledgement will be made in a future issue.

MSS, photographs and artwork are accepted on the basis that  
*BBC World Histories* and its agents do not accept liability for loss or  
damage to same. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the  
publisher. We abide by IPSO's rules and regulations. To give feedback  
about our magazines, please visit [immediate.co.uk](http://immediate.co.uk), email  
[editorialcomplaints@immediate.co.uk](mailto:editorialcomplaints@immediate.co.uk) or write to Katherine Conlon,  
Immediate Media Co., Vineyard House, 44 Brook Green,  
London W6 7BT, United Kingdom.



## Issue 15 – April/May 2019

*BBC World Histories* is published by Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited  
under licence from BBC Studios who help fund new BBC programmes.

## EDITORIAL

**Editor** Matt Elton +44 117 300 8645

[matt.elton@immediate.co.uk](mailto:matt.elton@immediate.co.uk)

**Group editor** Rob Attar

**Deputy editor, *BBC History Magazine*** Charlotte Hodgman

**Art editor** Susanne Frank

**Deputy art editors** Rosemary Smith, Sarah Lambert

**Designers** Scott McIntosh, Paul Jarrold

**Group production editor** Spencer Mizen

**Staff writer** Ellie Cawthorne

**Picture editor** Samantha Nott

**Deputy picture editor** Katherine Mitchell

**Digital editor** Emma Mason

**Deputy digital editor** Elinor Evans

**Digital editorial assistant** Rachel Dinning

## CONTRIBUTORS

Kehinde Andrews, Richard Askwith, Ian Beckett, Paul Bloomfield,  
Lissant Bolton, Rutger Bregman, Guy de la Bédoyère,  
Felipe Fernández-Armesto, Daniel Immerwahr, Simon Jenkins,  
Tiffany Jenkins, Tim Mackintosh-Smith, Zareer Masani, Violet Moller,  
Bryony Onciul, Olivette Otele, Richard Overy, Paul Preston, Kate Ravilious,  
Marie Rodet, James Rogers, Benjamin T Smith, Roel Sterckx,  
Astrid Swenson, Nina Wiedemeyer

## THANKS TO

Robert Blackmore, Hannah Boulton, Michael Cocks, Fay Glinister,  
Lucas Laursen, Michelle Lincoln, Josette Reeves, Anna Scott-Brown,  
Everett Sharp, Therese Teutsch, Sue Wingrove

## MARKETING & PRODUCTION

**Subscriptions director** Jacky Perales-Morris

**Subscriptions marketing manager** Natalie Lawrence

**US representative** Kate Buckley [buckley@buckleypell.com](mailto:buckley@buckleypell.com)

**Production co-ordinator** Lily Owens-Crossman

**Reprographics** Tony Hunt and Chris Sutch

**Advertising manager** Sam Jones

+44 117 300 8145 [sam.jones@immediate.co.uk](mailto:sam.jones@immediate.co.uk)

## IMMEDIATE MEDIA COMPANY

**Content director** David Musgrove

**Commercial director** Jemima Dixon

**Managing director** Andy Healy

**Group managing director** Andy Marshall

**CEO** Tom Bureau

## SYNDICATION

**Director of licensing & syndication** Tim Hudson

**International partners' manager** Anna Brown

## BBC STUDIOS

**Director of editorial governance** Nicholas Brett

**Director for consumer products and publishing** Andrew Moultrie

**Head of publishing** Mandy Thwaites

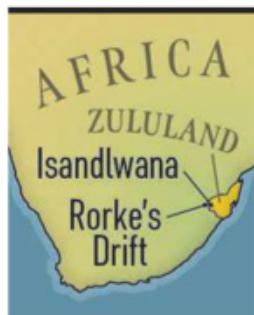
**Compliance manager** Cameron McEwan

**UK publishing co-ordinator** Eva Abramik [uk.publishing@bbc.com](mailto:uk.publishing@bbc.com)

[bbcworldwide.com/uk--anz/ukpublishing.aspx](http://bbcworldwide.com/uk--anz/ukpublishing.aspx)



# *Zulus and British troops clash in South Africa*



On 22 January 1879, Zulu soldiers defeated British troops at Isandlwana, then continued to Rorke's Drift where a tiny British contingent defended their position against overwhelming odds. **Ian Beckett** explores two views of the causes, actions and aftermath of these key battles

**Originally, Britain's key concern in Southern Africa was safeguarding the sea route to India, having decisively seized the Cape Colony in 1806. Over the following decades, though, it expanded its territory, annexing Natal in 1843, the diamond fields in Griqualand West in 1871 and the Transvaal in 1877. In 1879, though, it looked as if it had overstretched itself by invading Zululand – an act of aggression that was met with calamitous defeat in the first battle.**

By the late 1870s, Benjamin Disraeli's Conservative British government was pursuing confederation in South Africa, aiming to bring together British colonies and Boer states. Success in this aim depended upon resolving the 'native question' – the existence of independent

black states such as that of the Zulu. Reducing the Zulu to wage labour in the further economic exploitation of Africa was seen as part of a civilising process. In seeking to crush the perceived Zulu threat to Natal, however, the British High Commissioner in South Africa, Sir Bartle Frere, began making decisions and acting before receiving approval from London – a risky strategy at a time when Britain was already embroiled in fighting in Afghanistan, where it had committed substantial forces.

For Frere, the only necessity was finding legitimate reasons for a pre-emptive strike against the Zulu. The legal grounds were based on promises of good conduct supposedly extracted from the Zulu king, Cetshwayo, in 1873. The circumstances for exploiting them lay in the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877: by assuming the

protection of that province, the British inherited an existing frontier dispute between Boer and Zulu. Previously, the British had supported Zulu claims but, by favouring the Boers, Frere aimed to demonstrate to the latter the benefits of British rule.

After border incidents involving Zulu incursions into Natal, Frere presented an ultimatum, on the grounds that Cetshwayo had broken his promises: the entire Zulu military system must be dissolved. Receiving no reply, and despite not having received authorisation from the British government to take such action, on 11 January 1879 a force of around 12,000 men commanded by Lieutenant-General Lord Chelmsford invaded Zululand.

MAP: BATTLEFIELD DESIGNS/GETTY IMAGES



**Over the following pages we explore British and Zulu views of the clashes...**



Detail from *The Battle of Isandlwana* (c1885) by Charles Edwin Fripp. The painting's heroic tone is at odds with the catastrophic nature of the British defeat by the Zulu on 22 January 1879. It attracted little interest when first exhibited – but has since become the most popular image in the National Army Museum, London





# *“Those returning to the battlefield were appalled by the stench”*

Chelmsford was supremely confident that British firepower would easily prevail. By sending columns east into Zululand towards Cetshwayo's main homestead at Ulundi, he intended to entice the Zulu into attacking in the open. He assumed that the Zulu *impi* (army) could not be kept together for long, so Cetshwayo must throw it at the advancing columns to end the war quickly.

On 20 January, Chelmsford's force, which comprised British regular soldiers as well as native and colonial troops, encamped at Isandlwana. There he ignored his own field regulations by not preparing a defensive position – there was no entrenchment, nor was a *laager* (defensive circling of wagons) organised.

On 22 January, a scouting party discovered the large Zulu army sent by Cetshwayo – but Chelmsford, confident in his British troops, rifles and artillery, had already departed in the early hours with half of his force to seek the Zulu army. He left Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Pulleine in command of the camp at Isandlwana, and ignored messages reporting the Zulu attack.

The result was a catastrophe. At least 20,000 Zulu attacked the British position at Isandlwana, using their numerical superiority, knowledge of the terrain and well-drilled ‘buffalo-horns’ formation to overwhelm the camp.

No one had expected the Zulu assault, and Chelmsford disbelieved the warning messages that were sent to him once it began. Many men were packing up the camp, and too few were sent into the firing line. The Zulu easily swept round the back of Isandlwana and cut off all routes of retreat.

What followed was a bloody rout. An estimated 1,350 men of the British force, including 858 Europeans, died at Isandlwana – the worst single day's loss of British troops between Waterloo in 1815 and the start of the First World War in 1914. Those returning to the battlefield were appalled by the overpowering stench, like “a sweet potato that has been cooked when it is just beginning to go bad”. The most horrifying aspect was the ritual stripping and disembowelling of erstwhile comrades, and post-mortem stabbing of the corpses. As one private wrote: “The sight at the camp was horrible. Every white man that was killed or wounded was ripped up, and their bowels torn out; so there was no chance of anyone being left alive on the field.”

## **Second wave of attack**

It was claimed that the camp had fallen because native auxiliaries had given way at a crucial moment; because the ammunition supply to the British firing line had failed; and because the senior officer left in the camp had disobeyed orders in leading some defenders away into the open. In reality, the British had been too dispersed in face of overwhelming Zulu numerical superiority.

Even as Chelmsford returned to camp at sundown, having finally realised the seriousness of the situation at Isandlwana, a red glow could be seen in the sky to the west, above Rorke's Drift. This was the base depot on the Natal border from which Chelmsford had invaded Zululand 11 days previously. The tiny contingent there was under attack.

News of the defeat at Isandlwana reached the outpost at Rorke's Drift that same afternoon, carried by two

survivors of the first battle. The mission station encompassed a hospital, and the British officers quickly realised the futility of attempting escape with injured and sick men.

Instead, the small contingent of troops built a barrier of mealie (maize-meal) sacks and barricaded the doors in buildings. Some 3–4,000 Zulu warriors attacked the outpost, which was nonetheless successfully defended by just 139 men, including 35 hospital patients. For around 12 hours the defenders held off repeated attacks until about 4 o'clock the following morning, when the Zulu withdrew.

Reprisals against the perceived barbarity of the Zulu warriors followed. All but three of the Zulu wounded were finished off at Rorke's Drift on the morning of its relief. Zulu heads even appeared for sale in a taxidermist shop in Piccadilly.

Paradoxically, views of the Zulu people changed dramatically after these events. Queen Victoria proclaimed the Zulu “the finest and bravest race in South Africa”. *The Times* suggested that: “We have often before encountered barbarian enemies, but seldom enemies who united ferocity of barbarism with the discipline and unity which have been supposed to be characteristics of civilisation.”

The respect afforded to those men now deemed worthy opponents served to heighten the sense of British gallantry at Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift. Britain was soon awash with heroic song and verse, paintings and pictorial images. Popular fascination led to ‘Zulu’ appearing on stage, the sale of ‘Zulu’ products such as clay pipes, and even a touring ‘Zulu’ football team. ➔





ALAMY

### Against the odds

Detail from *The Defence of Rorke's Drift* (1880) by French painter Alphonse de Neuville. Mere hours after the massacre at Isandlwana, just 139 men held off repeated attacks on a British outpost by thousands of Zulu warriors. Though reprisals against the Zulu were harsh, the warriors garnered respect from such an unlikely quarter as Queen Victoria, who declared the Zulu to be "the finest and bravest race in South Africa"





# “Despite the initial victory, Cetshwayo was shocked by Zulu casualties”

**T**he Zulu, according to Frere, represented a “frightfully efficient man-slaying machine”. Originally a subdivision of the Bantu Nguni tribes, between 1817 and 1828 the Zulu were made into a formidable military force by their chief, Shaka. This transformation coincided with large-scale tribal movements over much of central, eastern and southern Africa caused by prolonged drought and overpopulation.

Between the ages of 14 and 18, Zulu youths would serve for two or three years herding cattle, working fields and being trained for war. At 18 they would form a new regiment and build a homestead. Regiments served as army, police and (mostly) labour force until marriage at the age of 35 or 40, when allegiance reverted to clans.

Having established their kingdom, the Zulu clashed with the Boers in the 1830s as the latter moved north to escape British rule, but when Britain annexed Natal in 1843, agreement on frontiers was secured.

The Zulu king from 1872, Cetshwayo – Shaka’s half-nephew – did not want war. He had sought British support for his succession, and promised good conduct. In April 1878 he expelled missionaries but even so was surprised by the British ultimatum. The Zulu could not contemplate dismantling the entire military system.

The British invasion came at the end of an exceptionally dry season that depleted pasture, killed cattle and delayed the harvest: it would be difficult to feed any *impi* for long. Cetshwayo therefore hoped to fight a limited war, and instructed his warriors not to cross into Natal, to avoid further provocation. Victory over Chelmsford’s column would enable him

to threaten (but not invade) Natal and compel the British to negotiate.

The Zulu had firearms but most were old muzzle-loaders. Moreover, firearms did not fit Zulu concepts of masculinity. Honour demanded killing at close quarters, especially with the short stabbing spears popularly known as *assegai*. Zulu warriors clung to ingrained tactics, notably the ‘buffalo-horns’ manoeuvre: younger regiments would form the left and right horns of the *impi*, racing ahead of the main body to encircle the opponents’ flanks and draw them into the ‘chest’ – a strategy that proved devastatingly effective at Isandlwana.

The practices so abhorrent to the British were considered necessities to the Zulu. Slitting open an enemy’s stomach allowed the spirit to escape, so that it would not haunt his slayer. Stabbing a corpse denoted participation in the kill, this “washing of the spears” extending to those who shared in it by their presence.

Despite the initial victory, Cetshwayo was shocked by Zulu casualties at Isandlwana and Rorke’s Drift – at least 1,600 dead – and angered that commanders had entered Natal. The Zulu had never faced modern weapons, and the British Martini-Henry rifle inflicted horrendous wounds. Another 2,000 Zulu perished during an attack at Kambula fortified camp in March 1879, and 1,500 more when faced with British Gatling guns at Ulundi on 4 July – the battle that broke the Zulu nation’s military power and marked the end of the war.

## Aftermath of the Anglo-Zulu War

The British had no appetite for annexation, and partitioned the Zulu kingdom between chiefs. Cetshwayo, who had been captured in August 1879, returned

in 1883 in a partial settlement revision, but civil war ensued. He died in February 1884, the partition settlement unravelled and Zululand was annexed by Britain in 1887. By that time, supremacy in South Africa became defined more by the struggle between Briton and Boer, and the Anglo-Zulu War was largely forgotten by Britain for over 80 years. Yet it had cost 6,000 Zulu lives, and Zululand disappeared as an independent entity.

In Britain, opposition to the war fuelled sentiment leading up to the 1880 general election. Disraeli’s Liberal counterpart William Gladstone intoned that Zulu had died “for no other offence than their attempt to defend... with their naked bodies, their hearths and homes, their wives and families”. Together with British reverses in Afghanistan, the war played its part in Conservative defeat, though in the longer term it did not end the imperial vision.

Memory of the war was revived in Britain in 1964 with the success of the film *Zulu*, starring Stanley Baker and Michael Caine. The Zulu perspective equally became significant in post-apartheid South Africa as part of a cultural and political reawakening of Zulu identity. Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who played Cetshwayo in *Zulu* and who founded the Inkatha Freedom Party in 1975, remarked in 2014 that the film had been “a notable piece of PR” for the Zulu. Inkatha regards the battlefields as shrines to Zulu nationalism, and tourism has bolstered the Zulu brand. Isandlwana and Rorke’s Drift are no longer forgotten. 🌐

**Ian Beckett** is professor of military history at the University of Kent, and author of *Rorke’s Drift and Isandlwana* (Oxford, 2019)

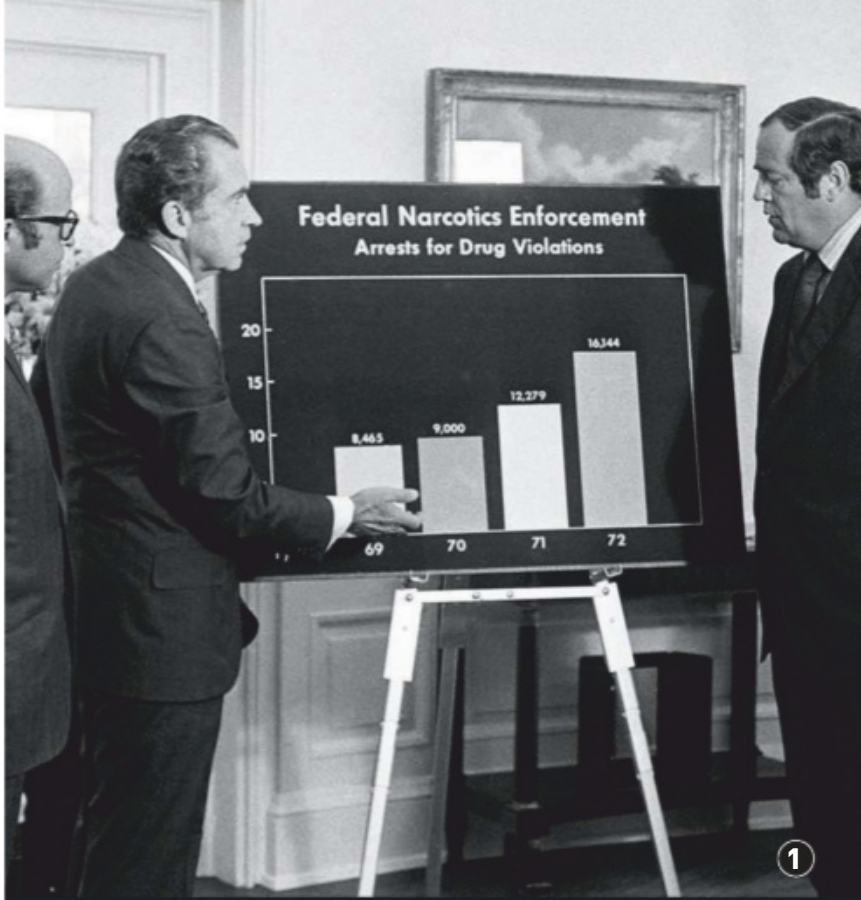




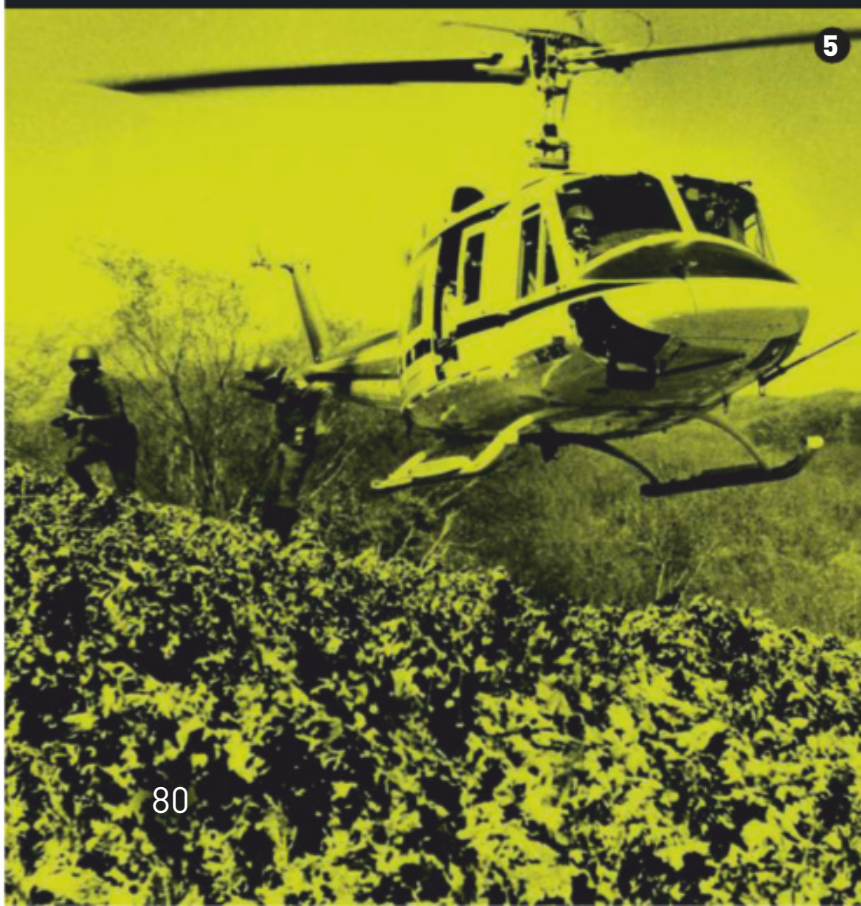
### Kingdom without a king

A dozen Zulu warriors pose c1880, after ultimate defeat in the Anglo-Zulu War. With their kingdom partitioned between chiefs and their king Cetshwayo captured and exiled, these men were suffering the aftermath of a conflict that claimed 6,000 Zulu lives. Yet, over eight decades later, the British film *Zulu* (1964) helped renew awareness of the war and fuel a cultural and political reawakening of Zulu identity





# AMERICA'S WAR EXPORTING







### Battles across borders

- ① US President Richard Nixon reviews a rise in drug-related arrests 1969–72
- ② A tailback on a Mexico highway at the US border caused by drug searches, c1970
- ③ US customs officers search a car on the Mexican border, 1969
- ④ A Mexican drug enforcement agent attacks an opium-poppy crop, 1999
- ⑤ Mexican soldiers dropped by helicopter into an opium poppy field, 1977
- ⑥ Los Angeles police chief Daryl F Gates, 1989. He took a hardline stance on drug use
- ⑦ Police sniffer dog Lancer searches for drugs at Boston's Logan Airport, 1971

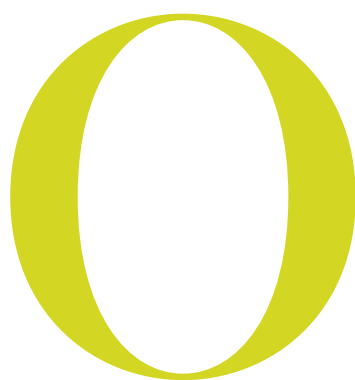
# ON DRUGS: THE FIGHT



BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

As the 1970s dawned, efforts to control the use and trafficking of narcotics increasingly meant that the 'war on drugs' was waged both in the US and overseas. **Benjamin T Smith** explores how the impact of President Nixon's political rhetoric is still felt around the world, nearly 50 years later →





n 17 June 1971, Richard Nixon, the president of the United States, gathered a press conference to present his new strategies for combating drug addiction. Some of his policies were relatively far-sighted: the launch of prevention and rehabilitation campaigns, and the establishment of hundreds of methadone

clinics for heroin addicts. But these were ignored by the gathered journalists. Instead, newspapers focused on Nixon's headline claim that drug abuse was "public enemy number one".

An enemy needs confronting, and within days the same newspapers were announcing that the Nixon administration was fighting a "war on drugs". America's – and, by extension, the world's – longest-running unwinnable conflict had begun.

For nearly five decades, US politicians have repeated Nixon's combative refrain. Ronald Reagan claimed that drug abuse was a "repudiation of everything America is". His drug tsar, Carlton Turner, claimed that marijuana increased vulnerability to AIDS. In 1990, Daryl F Gates, Chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, suggested casual drug users "ought to be taken out and shot". For the current president, drug-linked crime is the justification – at least, in part – for the building of a vast wall along the US-Mexico border. Law-and-order rhetoric, after all, has always proved a reliable vote-winner.

It's certainly true that, since the counterculture of the 1960s invited young people to 'get high and drop out', narcotics addiction has been a major problem in the United States. Although the dominant drug may have changed – from heroin in the 1970s to crack in the 1980s, methamphetamines in the 1990s and back to heroin in the 2000s – the human cost has only grown. Drug overdoses per 100,000 head of population have increased steadily since the 1970s, reaching 12.3 in 2010. By 2018, that figure had reached 20 people for every 100,000.

Such political rhetoric has been accompanied by increasingly stringent laws. This ramping-up of legislation began in 1973, when Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York State, introduced a raft of measures including lengthy mandatory sentences for drug dealers. His approaches soon influenced those of other states, and were locked into federal law with the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which rode the wave of public panic about crack cocaine and introduced the famous 100–1 sentencing disparity. (That directive – removed by Congress as recently as 2010 – mandated the same sentences for those caught with 50g of crack

cocaine as for those found in possession of 5,000g of the powdered form.) And they were expanded with the 1994 Crime Bill, with its 'three-strikes' provisions for repeat offenders.

This system has come down hardest on the country's African-American people. Though the majority of illegal-drug users and dealers are white, three-quarters of all people imprisoned for drug offences have been black or Latinx. In some places, the difference in incarceration rates is spectacular. In 15 states (mostly in the south), black people have been incarcerated for drug convictions at a rate between 20 and 75 times greater than white people. So unequal are the jail rates that US legal scholar Michelle Alexander has harked back to the era of racial segregation to describe the system, terming it "the new Jim Crow".

Over the years, the causes of these discrepancies have piled up: laws such as the 100–1 sentencing disparity have disproportionately targeted black men, while urban policing strategies have focused on street-corner sellers rather than campus peddlers or Wall Street dealers. Judicial decisions have often made reversing these imbalances virtually impossible.

For some in the Nixon administration, the intention was there from the start of the 'war'. In 1994, John Ehrlichman – Nixon's domestic policy advisor, who was convicted of criminal involvement in the Watergate affair – gave an extraordinary interview to writer Dan Baum, who reported it in 2016 as below:

"You want to know what this was really all about?... The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people... We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war [in Vietnam] or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalising both heavily, we could disrupt those communities... Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."

### The war on tour

If the war on drugs has transformed America, its effects have been equally significant abroad.

Before President Nixon, the United States' interference in overseas drug policy was sporadic and underpowered. Harry Anslinger, influential former head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN, 1930–62), undoubtedly believed that drugs were a supply-side problem, but he rarely had the manpower or presidential support to do more than hector UN representatives and engineer a few high-profile – but in the end rather futile – overseas busts.

Under Nixon, things changed. Brash, moneyed and weighed down with their own internal anxieties, counter-narcotics agents went international. In 1968, the FBN was rebranded as the Bureau of Narcotics and



An addict at a New York City drug rehabilitation centre, c1970. Nixon's policies included some far-sighted ideas such as rehabilitation campaigns





#### High times

A man smokes a joint during 1970's 'smoke-in' in Washington DC. "Since 1960s counter-culture invited young people to 'get high and drop out', narcotics addiction has been a major problem in the US," writes Benjamin T Smith



#### Imprisoned faithful

Muslim inmates pray in a Texas prison, 1997. Draconian anti-drug laws enacted since the 1960s have led to the imprisonment of a disproportionate number of African-Americans

**Although the majority of illegal-drug dealers and users in the US are white, three-quarters of the people imprisoned for drug offences have been black or Latinx**







**Trade and tailbacks**

Vast traffic jams clog Mexican roads in 1969 as US border checks create long delays. The resulting disruption to trade sparked the Mexican government into anti-drug action



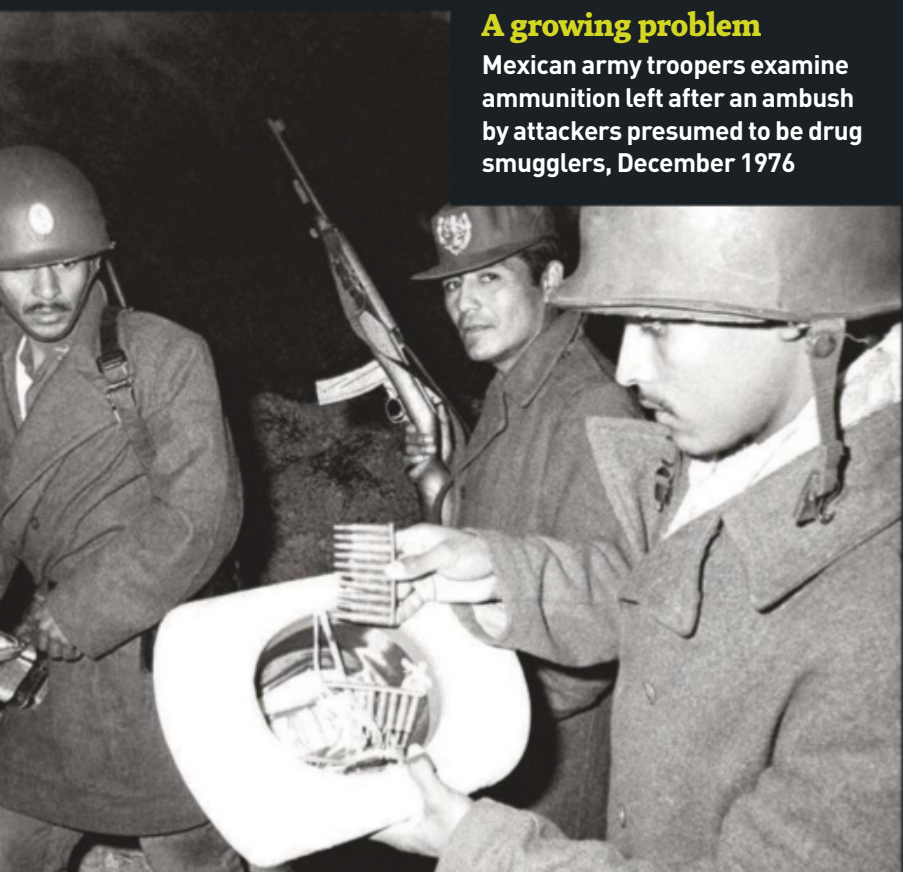
# Nixon announced a rigorous stop-and-search programme on the US border. Portrayed as a preventative strategy, it caused eight-hour tailbacks into the Mexican desert

## Strong arm of the law

Men suspected of narcotics offences are restrained following large-scale raids in 1973. New York governor Nelson Rockefeller introduced tough anti-drug measures that year

## A growing problem

Mexican army troopers examine ammunition left after an ambush by attackers presumed to be drug smugglers, December 1976



Dangerous Drugs (BNDD); in 1973 it underwent another reboot to become the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In under five years, staff numbers swelled from a few hundred to a few thousand, dragooned in from the old department as well as from local police forces, US Customs, the Food and Drug Administration and the CIA. The focus also shifted, now split evenly between domestic and international drug threats.

Among the first targets of the newly expanded DEA was America's principal source of marijuana and heroin: Mexico. Initially, US agents found Mexican authorities relatively unconcerned with the drug trade. Hippy culture had little purchase south of the border, where they were derided as *jipis*, often arrested and shorn of their long hair; Mexican addiction rates were negligible; the violence associated with the drug trade was almost non-existent; and, crucially, drugs provided many – politicians, police chiefs, peasant growers – with a healthy income.

## Imposing American policy

Three American strategies changed this. In 1969, Nixon announced a rigorous stop-and-search campaign on the US border, dubbed Operation Intercept. It was portrayed as a preventative strategy, designed to halt drug imports into the United States, but it was highly disruptive and caused hours-long traffic jams backing up into the Mexican desert. In doing so, it functioned as a means of extortion, and this disruption of trade pushed the Mexican government into action. As one former FBI agent later explained, “for diplomatic reasons the true purpose of the exercise was never revealed... it was an exercise in international extortion, pure, simple and effective, designed to bend Mexico to our will. We figured Mexico could hold out for a month; in fact, they caved in after two weeks, and we got what we wanted.”

The second strategy involved financial inducements. In the five years following Operation Intercept, the US government donated \$21 million dollars in cash and equipment to Mexico's Federal Judicial Police (PJF), responsible for drug enforcement. Gifts included planes, helicopters, aerial sensory photography equipment, portable radios, automatic weapons, night-vision goggles, mobile radio stations and portable shooting ranges.

The third strategy was to leak revelations designed to embarrass the Mexican government. In 1975, the DEA made public details of a two-year investigation into a drug ring run by a Cuban exile-turned-marijuana smuggler, Alberto Sicilia Falcón, who had established his base of operations in an enormous narco-palace in the border town of Tijuana. A flamboyant bisexual, with friends among the Mexican establishment and a girlfriend who had been the lover of the Mexican president, Sicilia Falcón made a good target. Better still, one of the witnesses claimed that Sicilia Falcón was exchanging guns for drugs with guerrilla rebels. The drug trade – so the DEA claimed – was not only a criminal threat, it was funding and arming a left-wing insurgency. Such accusations forced the Mexican authorities to act. They →





#### **Burning issue**

Peruvian anti-narcotics police, aided by US Drug Enforcement agents, burn a cocaine-processing plant in central Peru, c1980. American anti-drug efforts were exported to countries elsewhere in the world

**The campaign in Mexico was a sign of things to come. Over the following years, similar programmes were wheeled out in Jamaica, Peru, Chile and, most recently, Afghanistan**



#### **Crop rotation**

A helicopter sprays a Mexican narcotics crop with herbicides. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, similar methods were deployed as part of the anti-narcotics campaign dubbed Operation Condor



not only arrested Sicilia Falcón, but also gave in to US demands for a more confrontational counter-narcotics campaign.

Together, the three strategies worked. They blended with the aims of Mexican government, which wanted to extend direct political control into its more remote regions. And they found supporters among certain Mexican officials who sought to use the war on drugs to promote their own careers – for instance, Luis Echeverría aimed to become head of the UN on the back of his counter-narcotics policies. Cooperation culminated with Operation Condor, a vast multi-agency operation that from 1976 onwards targeted opium- and marijuana-growing regions with aerial herbicide spraying, mass arrests and military incursions into particularly troublesome zones.

In terms of numbers, the results were impressive. Drug arrests, narcotics seizures and the acres of drug plants destroyed increased year on year throughout the 1970s. Prisons filled and so-called kingpins were arrested or, if necessary, shot.

### Cost of the conflict

The costs, though, were immense. Some were the direct results of the aggressive policing. Funded by the US government, trained and legitimised by the DEA, the PJF expanded both in size and power. In many towns and cities it acted like an invading army, killing suspected drug traffickers, arresting others and subjecting them to savage forms of torture. One DEA agent used to joke that a particularly unpleasant commander had “killed more Mexicans than smallpox”.

A team of lawyers who interviewed 400 detainees of Operation Condor found that most were poor peasants busted for growing a handful of marijuana plants, and had been subjected to multiple forms of torture, including beating, waterboarding, suffocation and rape. (The police had even invented their own distinct slang for such actions: Mexican waterboarding was known as ‘the *tehuacanazo*’, after the brand of spring water that was fired up a suspect’s nose.) These were the lucky ones: others were just booted out of helicopters into the Pacific Ocean.

Other effects were more indirect. Until the 1970s, the Mexican drug trade had been marked by teamwork rather than competition. The market was big enough to share, so conflicts and murders were rare. Official pressure changed this. Faced with the prospect of torture or death, notions of cooperation and trust disappeared, with many traffickers turning on their former allies and very consciously using the police to take out their rivals. What had been a business turned into a war.

The US campaign in Mexico was a sign of things to come. Over the following years, similar programmes were wheeled out in dozens of countries including Jamaica, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Thailand and, most recently, Afghanistan. As in Mexico, these actions often tied in with domestic state-building efforts, and regularly sucked in both the local military and a newly tooled-up police. They were almost always dogged

**Benjamin T Smith** is reader of Latin American history at the University of Warwick



Farmers harvest sap from opium poppies in Afghanistan which, despite long-running US operations, remains the world’s top opium producer

by accusations of brutality and torture. Most damningly, they failed to achieve any real reduction in narcotics supplies. At best, they pushed cultivation to other, relatively peaceful areas. At worst, they turned trafficking groups against one another and sparked bloody, murderous conflicts.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the country where it all began – Mexico. Since 2006, the Mexican government has waged its own militarised war on drugs. It has done so with the open support of the US, which has offered money (\$1.5 billion at last count), guns, telecommunications networks, on-the-ground assistance and, above all, legitimacy.

The results have been unerringly predictable. Just as in the 1970s, official pressure has caused cartels to fragment, fan out, turn on one another, and become involved with other, much more violent forms of crime. International pressure to investigate government massacres has been negligible.

Things proceed much as they always have in the US. Some American governments have been more repressive than others. The Clinton and both Bush administrations embraced harsh anti-drug rhetoric and stringent laws, for instance, whereas the 1970s administration of Jimmy Carter flirted with decriminalising marijuana; more recently, Barack Obama spoke out against mass incarceration. Yet those latter two faced opposition in the legislature and the judiciary, and their actions were predominantly symbolic; actual reductions in the prison population were slight.

Meanwhile, the drug trade continues as before. In 2018, America suffered its highest-ever number of drug overdoses. More people died from opioids than gun crime or car crashes. To date, there have been no winners in the war on drugs. 🌐



**BBC** **HiSTORY** MAGAZINE

**Save when you subscribe**  
to the digital edition  
of *BBC History Magazine*



*BBC History Magazine* is Britain's bestselling history magazine.  
We feature leading historians writing lively and  
thought-provoking new takes on the great events of the past.

Available from



**zinio**<sup>TM</sup>





## **THE LONG READ**

# A short history of long-distance warfare

Dealing death from a safe distance has been the aim of fighters since the earliest times

**BY JAMES ROGERS**



European melee weapons from the 15th to 17th centuries. By that time, these close-combat arms were being usurped by crossbows and firearms





umans are pretty good at killing. From sharp rocks and blunt clubs to long-distance bombers and remote-controlled robots, the quest to kill in new and ‘improved’ ways has long captivated humanity’s creative capacity. Yet at the heart of these developments is something revealing and rather disturbing. With each new epoch of weaponry and warfare

has come a separation of the human from the visceral heat of battle, from face-to-face fighting, and from the very act of killing. There are exceptions, of course: in any era of conflict, humans might still find themselves in hand-to-hand combat, but this is most certainly not the norm. Instead, over the *longue durée* of human history, countless attempts have been made to produce weapons that allow us to become more detached from those we kill.

There is a very prosaic reason for this. We distance ourselves from killing so that we do not incur the risk of being killed ourselves. Some may call this cowardly, yet it is no secret that societies and states have sought to save blood and treasure by protecting their fittest, fastest, most highly trained and brightest young fighters. If you can kill from a distance, with superior weapons, it negates the need to risk the sacrifice of life. This has been key to survival throughout history. Still, is this the only reason we seek weapons that distance us from the practice of killing? Or is there something less instinctive and more cognitively driven that explains why we choose to develop and then hide behind ever more advanced weapons?



Let’s step back 10,000 years or so, to a time around the end of the last ice age. By the fertile and frequented shores of a lagoon in Kenya, 21 miles west of Lake Turkana, early peoples fished, drank fresh water and, as indicated by fragments of pottery from the area, foraged and stored food. This was a seemingly serene place, but don’t be fooled: according to researchers from the University of Cambridge, this was also the site of the world’s earliest recorded mass killings. Down by the banks of the lagoon, 27 foragers were brutally murdered by a rival group in an attack dubbed the ‘Nataruk Massacre’. The history of this incident tells us a lot about the early human experience with weaponry.



A late Bronze/early Iron Age statue of the god Reshef bearing a mace and shield, found at Shomron, West Bank

AKG IMAGES



## The crossbow was a great leveller: cheap, easy to use, powerful, accurate

The Cambridge archaeologists found the remains of pregnant women with their hands bound behind their backs, and of children whose bodies were peppered with arrowheads made from jet-black obsidian. They also found evidence of sharp-force trauma caused by spear-like weapons, and male skulls that had been smashed by blunt force, possibly using clubs or rocks. This was the earliest documented evidence of humanity's dark side in brutal action. A whole clan of people – a small society, with myths and customs now lost – was annihilated by a 'superior' group, certainly one with superior weapons. But why? It appears that the indiscriminate killing of rivals was an important survival strategy during this period, pitting one clan against the other. Perhaps there was rivalry over land, food or culture. This does not sound unfamiliar to modern ears: wars have been fought over less. And early weapons – spears, arrows and clubs – allowed our human ancestors to commit these 'crimes against humanity'. Those who had the more advanced weapons, and the preponderance of force, were able to kill off rivals and survive. This lesson was not lost throughout human 'progression'.



**A 10,000-year-old skull excavated at Nataruk, north-west Kenya, showing evidence of attack with a rock or club during the mass slaughter of a clan by a rival group**



**N**ow let's jump forward to medieval Europe. Picture noble, chivalrous knights high on horseback, decked in chain mail and brandishing swords. Charging valiantly into chaotic, bloody battles, safe from the brutal melee below they thrust down and impale enemy footsoldiers. The training of knights began young. A teenage squire would accompany a knight into battle as a flag bearer or to hold a shield. As the boy got older and was strong enough to hold a heavy, full-length metal sword, he would be given the chance to prove his worth in battle. If he survived, he would be made a knight in his own right.

During the era of the crusades, though, a new threat to this noble (often wealthy, and usually Christian) system emerged. The crossbow had been around in China since at least the fifth-century, when Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* touched upon the energy bound up in bow and trigger. But in the 12th century the crossbow began to cause concern in Europe. It was likely brought to Britain during the Norman conquest, quickly spreading across Europe to become the weapon of choice for continental armies. The crossbow was a great leveller: it was cheap, easy to produce, even easier to use and, most importantly, deadly powerful and accurate. This meant that any society, even those outside Europe and deemed uncivilised, could build large armies of crossbow-wielding 'heathens' and – for the first time, it seemed – challenge the dominance of highly trained, wealthy (and expensive to replace) elite knights in shining armour. This brought fear to those in power. Such a weapon could not be left unregulated.

As historian Ralph Payne-Gallwey explained, the crossbow was "considered so barbarous" that it was banned by Pope Urban II in 1096 and again by Pope





A 15th-century illustration of the siege of Damascus (1148) depicts a soldier using a crossbow – a weapon that both alarmed and appealed to 12th-century European armies

Innocent II during the Catholic Church's second Lateran Council in 1139. The punishment for using such a weapon "hateful to God and unfit for Christians" was anathema – excommunication by the pope. There is a key, telling caveat here, however: it was acceptable, and even encouraged, for Europeans to deploy the crossbow against those who weren't European elites (and usually not Christian).

The crossbow would be the ideal weapon for the 'civilised' to kill the 'uncivilised' at distance. Richard the Lionheart was, for instance, an expert with the weapon, and would take potshots at the 'ungodly' for sport. In 1189–91, during the siege of Acre (on the northern Mediterranean coast of what's now Israel) and while suffering from a fever, the king would "enjoy the pleasure of shooting bolts" at Turks and infidels to cheer him up. His action were sanctioned by the pope and by God because of the race and religion of his targets.

Perhaps, then, Europeans were not so civilised or chivalrous. Indeed, as European nations grew stronger from the 15th century and established themselves at the centre of the self-proclaimed civilised world, it became common for distancing weapons to be used unsparingly against 'others', even if those 'others' refused to take part in this sanitised, detached form of war. The rise of the modern gun is one example of this.



When describing guns in the late 16th century, a French soldier remarked that they were deployed by those "who would not dare look in the face of those whom they lay low with their wretched bullets". If we explore the history of firearms – from early handguns to cannons and machine guns – it's clear that these weapons allowed humans to kill with ever-greater ease and without human-to-human contact. Perhaps this is part of the allure. Gunpowder and 'fire lances' (spears with pyrotechnics attached) have caused fear in battle since their first use in China in the 10th century, allowing armies to terrorise their enemies from distance. These warriors would even tie fireworks and spears to animals – usually oxen – sending them in a panicked flurry towards the enemy in an attempt to strike fear. In the 13th century, trade with Asia along the Silk Roads brought gunpowder into European and Ottoman ranks. Though early weapons using gunpowder were inefficient, dangerous and cumbersome, by the 16th century more-powerful guns were being produced, and they replaced the bow as the most effective distance weapon.

Not everyone took kindly to such 'advances', however. Societies in Persia and across Islamic north Africa did not welcome the modern guns that came flooding in from the European continent. An example was the Mamluk sultanate, ruling from Cairo from the 13th century. This ancient Islamic society considered guns to be out of step with traditional ideas of a warrior's honour. Furusiyya was the Mamluk equivalent of the chivalry and, as historian Shihab Al-Sarraf has written, it put an onus on nobility and skilled training for "close combat" and "the art of war itself". Killing, if necessary, was to be done face to face and as a last resort. That's not to say that they didn't own both guns and cannons, but the Mamluks refrained



from using them in battle. According to historian Alexander DeConde, the Mamluks believed the gun to be unfit for use because of the “unchivalrous and immoral character of the weapon”.

There are those who dispute this – who claim that the Mamluks were unprepared and untrained for modern war – but the fact is that in 1517 the Mamluks placed guns and cannons on the battlefield against an invading Ottoman force, yet still did not use them against their foes. There is a lesson here, one that we have seen before. In time, the inability or moral refusal of the Mamluks to harness superior weapons ultimately led to their downfall. The society that did not use the gun would be annihilated, from distance, by stronger Ottoman forces that did. The victors were those who embraced the disturbingly distant and easy method of killing. Indeed, the Mamluks were just one of many states to suffer defeat during the 16th and 17th century, in part because of their rejection of firearms. The Iranian Safavid dynasty was reluctant to use such weapons, and were defeated in battle by the Ottomans in the 16th century – until they themselves adopted these weapons. And the British and French colonial campaigns in Africa – such as the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, in which the British used the Gatling gun (a proto machine gun) – provide reminders of how guns have been used to wipe out foes en masse and at distance. Yet, when it comes to weaponry, what goes around comes around, and it was not long before the world’s victorious empires would be turning these weapons on each other.



An inlaid bronze 14th-century basin shows Mamluk soldiers. The Mamluks’ refusal to fire guns exposed them to defeat by enemies who did use such weapons

**A**mid the trenches of the First World War, ‘no man’s land’ was a space between opposing enemies where all humans feared to tread. Some chose to face execution rather than raise their heads above the parapets. ‘Cowardice’ was punishable by firing squad. But what made these armies stop in their tracks and dig into the earth for safety? What made soldiers lose their minds, refuse to fight, and flee the field of battle – even though that act would also mean death for the men involved?

The answers were perched on the lips of trenches, surrounded by sandbags: machine guns. Fast, accurate, and powerful, these were ideal weapons when facing lesser and weaker armed forces. One of the first, invented around 1884, was the Maxim gun, named for its American-British inventor Hiram Stevens Maxim. With a rate of fire surpassing 500 rounds per minute, it was used to annihilate whole armies during the British and German colonial campaigns. Yet when these empires ultimately met each other on the battlefields of Europe, the machine gun would not be their saviour. Instead, it would cause the



BRIDGEMAN

**By the 16th century, more-powerful guns replaced the bow as the most effective distance weapons**





deaths of millions of their youngest, fittest and brightest. More than 41 million were killed and wounded in the First World War, including more than 300,000 Americans. And in the postwar era, other rising world powers – especially the US – looked to make war more ‘civilised’, turning to new weapons of ‘morality’, ‘distance’, and ‘sterile precision’ to help make war safer, winnable, ‘better’.



**I**ntroduced in 1918, the first pilotless aerial attack weapon was developed by the United States to mitigate the need to put its young soldiers at risk on the battlefield. Often called an early drone or cruise missile, the creators of the Kettering Bug referred to it as an ‘aerial torpedo’. The intention was to provide the US military with a weapon to comply with the ‘Over, not through’ principle that emerged after the First World War. The idea was to bomb enemy factories with pinpoint precision, the hope being that an enemy’s war-making capacity could be destroyed from the air without any human having to face that foe (or its machine guns) on the battlefield.

The ‘Bug’, as it came to be known, was one part of the project to remove the human from war. It was an unmanned device, set on rails, that would speed up along and take off from a ramp. When its engine had gone through a pre-set number of revolutions, the wings would detach and the Bug would plunge to earth “like a bird of prey”. In reality, the short range and unreliability of this futuristic machine made it of very little strategic use, but it marked the start of a search for high-tech solutions to the risks and dilemmas of ground warfare that had been triggered by the destructiveness of the machine gun. Such ambitions continue today within American warfare. The modern robotic drone is simply the latest manifestation of this drive to remove the human from harm’s way and to ‘perfect’ or sanitise warfare.

So, how does this ambition manifest itself in modern warfare? Today, when looking to recruit new drone pilots and sensor operators, the United States Air Force focuses on the perceived virtues and high-tech capabilities of the drone to draw in new blood. Recruits can be as young as 17 years old. Being part of the team that controls a state-of-the-art flying robot is badged as an exciting opportunity, but also a worthy one. The argument is that drones are ‘better’ than conventional weapons. Not only are they high-tech, futuristic and powerful but – thanks to their pin-point precision missiles, ability to loiter for long periods, and sophisticated video equipment – they can also distinguish between friend and foe on the ground, purportedly killing the ‘bad guys’ and saving the good.

What is important about the drone, of course, is that the pilot and operator are not physically near the conflict they are involved in. They are vital to success, and the drone itself is in the region of combat, yet it does not have a pilot inside. Instead, the drone’s controllers are usually thousands of miles away from the actual ‘battlefield’. At the end of the day they commute home. So they are able to deploy deadly force globally without risking

British soldiers aim a Maxim gun during the First World War. The large-scale carnage wreaked by machine guns in this conflict caused world powers to seek more ‘civilised’ ways of waging war



**In 1918, the first pilotless aerial attack weapon was developed by the US to reduce the need to risk soldiers on the battlefield**



their own lives – one of the unique selling points of the drone. US political and military elites can choose to confront perceived threats around the world without directly risking the lives of young Americans. Nevertheless, not everyone agrees that this form of warfare is of benefit to humanity.

Those of conscience, such as Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, argue that armed drones undermine the moral standards and humanity that American society holds dear. In 2013, Tutu stated in an open letter to the editor of the *New York Times* that such policies are equivalent to apartheid, emphasising the dehumanising characteristics of the weapons that kill at such distance. Yet the robot campaigns continue apace, allowing one side in a conflict to kill another without any risk or fear of death. Like the arrow and spear or the crossbow and gun, they allow a dominant force to prevail and a weaker enemy to be extinguished – all without having to uncomfortably look an adversary in the eye.

In recent years, at least 542 lethal drone strikes were launched during the leadership of US president Barack Obama, and drone strikes are continuing under President Trump, while also being used in new and ever-more-indiscriminate ways. The death toll of non-combatants from US drone strikes is uncertain: official estimates number in the hundreds, and unofficial estimates in the thousands. But this is the point. The aim is to kill at such a distance that we cannot count the number of those we kill, let alone know their names, their beliefs, their intent.

A worrying trend to note about the future of war is that the United States is no longer alone in this practice of remote killing. Not only have at least 18 state actors acquired armed drones, but the use of a drone is now open to anyone with the ability to turn an off-the-shelf quadcopter into an airborne improvised explosive device. As a result, we have entered a new, long-desired epoch of warfare – one in which distancing weapons can take lives without risking that of the aggressor. Think back to the machine gun, though – surely the question we must ask is: will such ‘advances’ come back to haunt those who first promoted their use?



**W**hat does all this tell us about humanity, and about war? It is the future that the human race has long been building towards: to kill, yet to never really feel what it is like to take a life. To remove the need for face-to-face combat, the risk of visceral battle, from the killing loop. Throughout history our developments in weapons technologies have allowed us to carry out the exercise of killing in an increasingly detached, sterile and disconnected manner.

This is not to say that killing is ever ‘clean’. For those on the receiving end, it is always heinous and horrific. But it is easier to carry out the act at a distance as we are disconnected from the process. With our enemy at a distance, it also makes it easier for us to dehumanise our foe, to believe racially inspired myths. And it becomes easier to conduct killings that were once only carried out as a last resort and for survival. 🌐

**James Rogers** is assistant professor in war studies at the University of Southern Denmark and visiting research fellow, Yale University. He is on Twitter: @DrJamesRogers

Boys inspect the wreckage of a car hit by a drone strike in Yemen, 2017. At least 18 state actors have now acquired armed drones



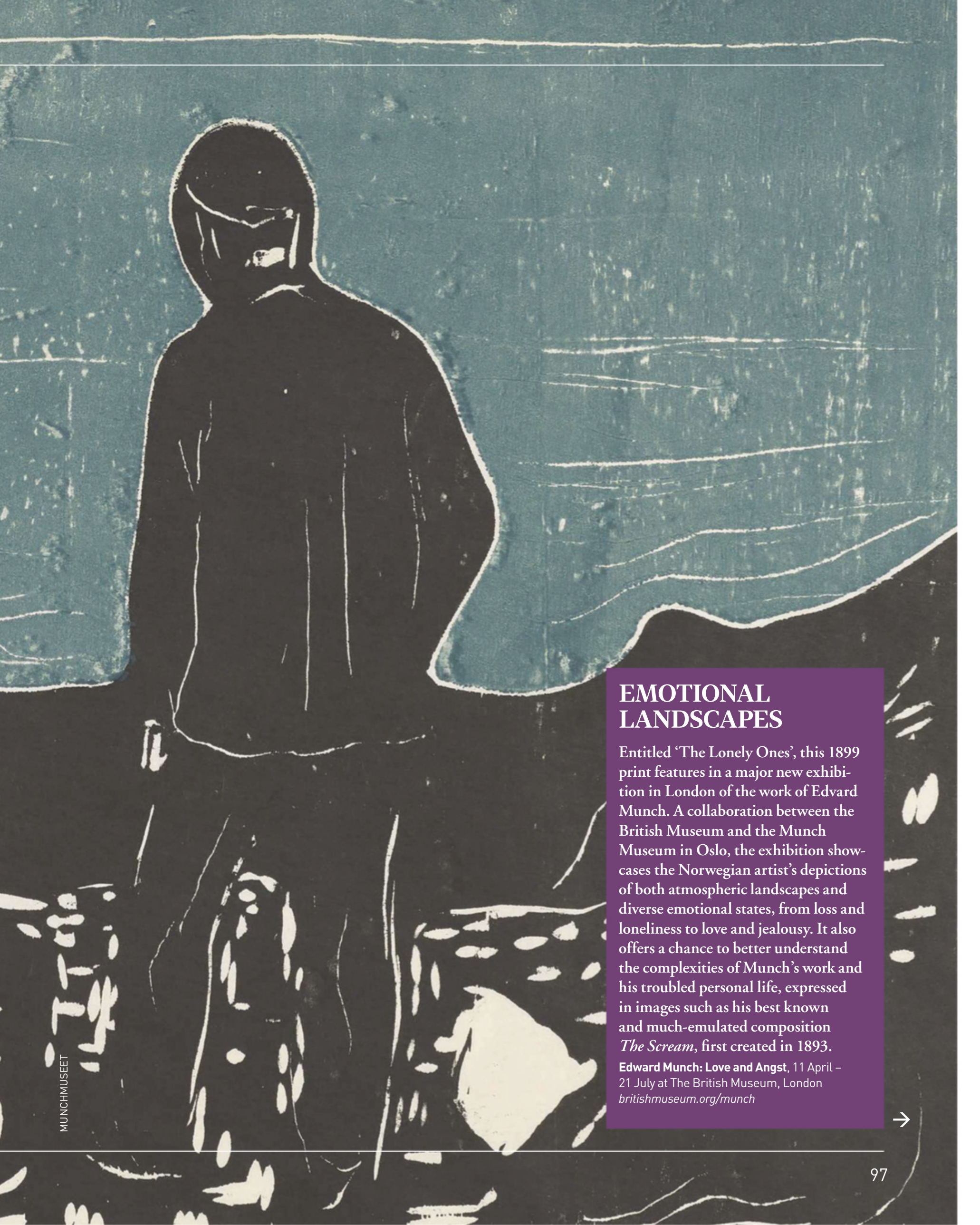


# Agenda

EXHIBITIONS, TV,  
FILMS AND  
MORE







## EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES

Entitled 'The Lonely Ones', this 1899 print features in a major new exhibition in London of the work of Edvard Munch. A collaboration between the British Museum and the Munch Museum in Oslo, the exhibition showcases the Norwegian artist's depictions of both atmospheric landscapes and diverse emotional states, from loss and loneliness to love and jealousy. It also offers a chance to better understand the complexities of Munch's work and his troubled personal life, expressed in images such as his best known and much-emulated composition *The Scream*, first created in 1893.

**Edvard Munch: Love and Angst**, 11 April – 21 July at The British Museum, London  
[britishmuseum.org/munch](http://britishmuseum.org/munch)



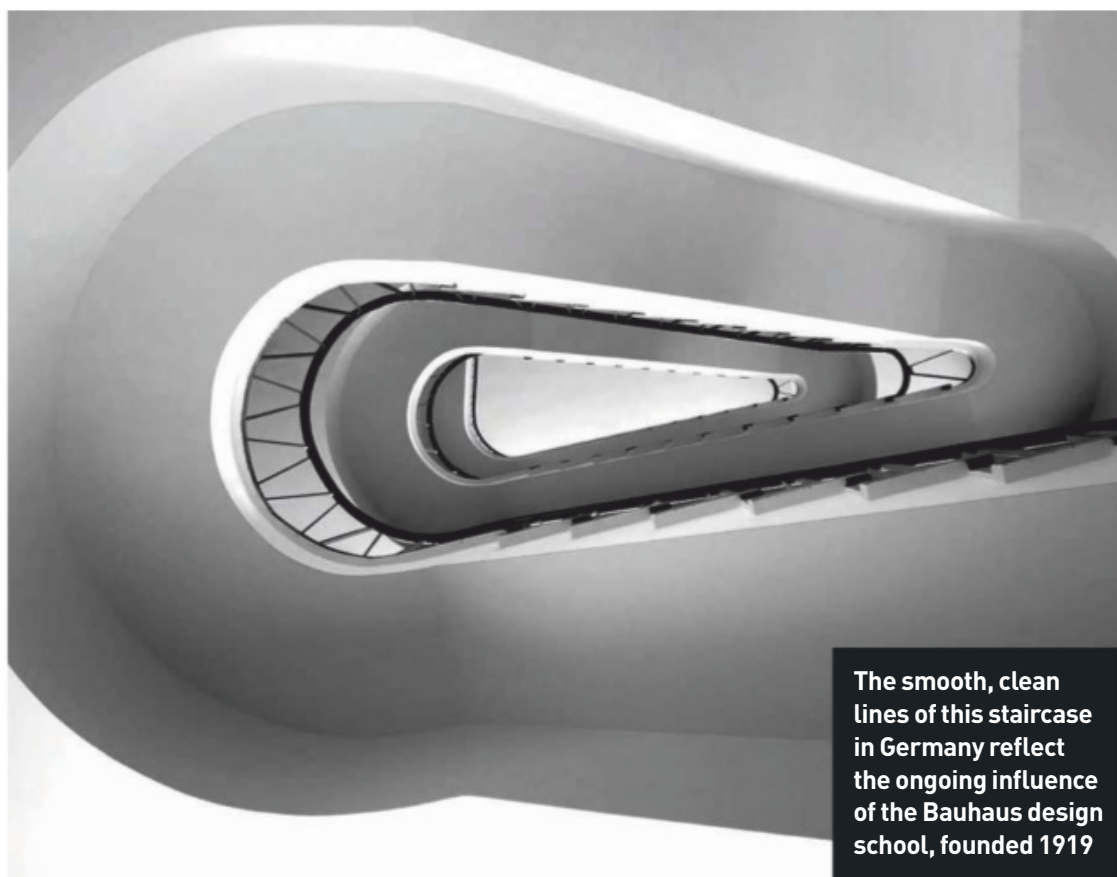




## TIME TRAVELLERS

If you've read EM Forster's 1908 novel *A Room with a View*, you'll remember the varying degrees of faith that its characters, embarking on a tour of Florence, put in their Baedeker travel guidebooks to Italy. A new exhibition at the National Gallery of Ireland explores early examples of the genre, including some written in the 17th and 18th centuries. They are interesting not only for the information they provide about Italy's towns and cities in the period – complete, in some cases, with detailed illustrations, such as the 1773 depiction of the Colosseum above – but also because of the choices of cultural highlights deemed worthy of inclusion.

**The Voyage of Italy: 200 Years of Travel Guides**, until 15 September at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin  
[nationalgallery.ie](http://nationalgallery.ie)



The smooth, clean lines of this staircase in Germany reflect the ongoing influence of the Bauhaus design school, founded 1919

## SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

Between 1919 and 1933, Germany's Bauhaus teemed with ideas, expressed via diverse media and in works that often remain startling even now, a century after the school's foundation. (We highlight some striking examples in our feature on page 66.) To mark that centenary, the BBC has launched a new season of programmes chronicling the movement and its continued impact across the decades that followed.

On BBC Radio 4, *Walter Gropius: Visionary Founder of the Bauhaus* explores how the school director and architect gathered a roster of famous names – including Klee and Kandinsky – to create a new philosophy of art. Based on a new

biography by Fiona MacCarthy, the series is online now at [bbc.co.uk/sounds](http://bbc.co.uk/sounds).

Leading Bauhaus figures also take centre stage in two TV series. *Bauhaus 100* charts the school's evolution through the work of its artists, while *Anni Albers: A Life in Thread* reveals how that artist and printmaker shifted the perception of textiles from solely a craft to representing a valid form of artistic expression. Albers was forced to flee to the US as the Nazis' power burgeoned in Germany, and her story is a reminder of the violent, dangerous era in which these iconoclastic works were created. For details of when the series are set to air, see [historyextra.com/tvradio](http://historyextra.com/tvradio).

ALAMY/NATIONAL GALLERY IRELAND



KiKi Layne and Stephan James in *If Beale Street Could Talk*, set in 1970s New York

## STREET SPIRIT

It's only just left cinemas, but the acclaimed adaptation of US writer James Baldwin's 1974 novel *If Beale Street Could Talk* is available for home viewing this spring. Set in 1970s Harlem, it's both a love story and a potent exploration of the racial, sexual and economic politics of the era. Adapted by Barry Jenkins, director of *Moonlight* (2016), it's a similarly sympathetic look at the ways in which its characters are shaped by wider social forces.

**If Beale Street Could Talk**, from 12 March (US), other release dates vary  
[bealestreet.movie](http://bealestreet.movie)





Andrea del Verrocchio's *Madonna and Child*, painted c1470, is among the works in a new exhibition of his work that also explores its influence on one of his best-known students, famed polymath Leonardo da Vinci

## MASTER OF ARTS

As the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death on 2 May 1519 approaches, the Renaissance polymath – artist, engineer, inventor – is hot historical currency. But if you're curious about the influences shaping da Vinci's career, a new exhibition at Florence's Palazzo Strozzi provides insights.

The exhibition chronicles the life of Andrea del Verrocchio, the 15th-century workshop master and pioneering artist who trained several notable pupils, including da Vinci. Reflecting the wide range of media in which he worked, it gathers together a diverse array of paintings, sculptures and drawings from major institutions including the Musée du Louvre in Paris and New York's Met

Museum. They include *Madonna and Child* (above), painted c1470, and the celebrated statue *David*, on loan from the Museo del Bargello.

Of course, as one of his most famous apprentices, da Vinci looms large in any telling of Verrocchio's life. As such, the exhibition also examines the early years of Leonardo's career, and the ways in which the output of each of the two men informed the other's work.

If you're in Florence this spring, this is a great opportunity to learn more about the formative years of a nascent genius.

**Verrocchio, Master of Leonardo**, at Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy until 14 July [palazzostrozzi.org](http://palazzostrozzi.org)

## SILK AND INCENSE

The statue of a ruby-eyed goddess below was made in ancient Mesopotamia between the first century BC and the first century AD. It's among the objects in a new Met Museum exhibition focusing on cultures that sprang up in the Middle East in that era, funded by wealth from trading routes carrying valuable commodities such as silk and incense. As the Roman and Parthian empires battled for control of that network, diverse cultural traditions emerged, creating artefacts that are now at risk from violence and looting in the region.

**The World Between Empires: Art and Identity in the Ancient Middle East**, until 23 June at The Met Fifth Avenue, New York [metmuseum.org/exhibitions](http://metmuseum.org/exhibitions)



A statuette of a standing nude goddess, made from alabaster, gold and rubies, features in a new look at the art of the ancient Middle East





# Journeys

*Stories and sights from global history*

Sphinx statues line the road linking the great temples of Karnak and Luxor at Thebes (now also called Luxor). In AD 19 the Roman general Germanicus may have traversed this route, which had been restored by Cleopatra half a century earlier





# *In the footsteps of...* **A Roman general's journey to Egypt**

**Guy de la Bédoyère** follows the first-century AD travels of Germanicus round the eastern Mediterranean and up the Nile

AWL IMAGES





**T**he monuments of pharaonic Egypt have attracted tourists since ancient times – indeed, Romans from the Republic and early imperial eras recalled with wonder their visits to the tombs and temples along the Nile. One of the best-recorded journeys from that period was made by Germanicus – celebrated general, senior member of the imperial family and darling of the Roman mob – who voyaged to Egypt via the eastern Mediterranean in the years AD 17–19. His progress can be pieced together from the writings of the Roman historian Tacitus and some other broadly contemporary surviving documents.

The trade route between Italy and Egypt was one of the greatest of the Roman era, operating in both directions. Ships poured into and out of the ports of Ostia (near Rome) and Puteoli (now Pozzuoli, near Naples) year round. Some of these had sailed from Egypt, arguably Rome's wealthiest province, which had been seized by Octavian (later known as Augustus, who became the first Roman emperor) following his victory over Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. After that conquest, Egypt supplied vast quantities of grain to feed Rome, but it was already a tourist destination, having attracted enthusiastic Romans for centuries. Germanicus, however, took a circuitous route there.

As the winter of AD 17 approached, Germanicus – nephew of the emperor Tiberius – set out to the eastern empire to act as an imperial deputy, taking his wife, Agrippina the Elder, and some of their children. They sailed on a leisurely route, setting off from eastern Italy

– probably sailing from Brundisium (Brindisi) – to cross the Adriatic to visit Germanicus' cousin Drusus, Tiberius's son, then stationed in Dalmatia, roughly spanning what's now Croatia.

### **Greek odyssey**

It was probably the spring of AD 18 before Germanicus and his family continued on to Greece. But though winter was behind them, his fleet encountered fierce storms in both the Adriatic and Ionian seas; some of his ships were badly damaged, and the fleet docked in a port in north-western Greece for repairs. Germanicus took the chance to visit the relics and monuments of the great naval battle of Actium, victory at which had made Octavian the most powerful man in the Roman world half a century earlier.

After his vessels were repaired, Germanicus's fleet continued on to Athens. In an era before proper navigation aids, his ships were forced to hug the coast as it negotiated the treacherous route round the Peloponnese, where shipwreck – with little or no chance of being rescued – was a very serious risk. By that time, the Mediterranean had become a superhighway that made it possible for the Roman empire to exist – but it was still dangerous.

Germanicus and his family were greeted by the Greeks at Athens, then crossed to the island of Euboea (Evia) and sailed across the Aegean to Lesbos, just off the coast of Anatolia, where his youngest daughter, Julia Livilla, was born. Ever the tourist, Germanicus headed north-west to visit the ancient site of Troy, which was the mythical home of Aeneas, ancestor of Romulus →



### **Germanicus: Mighty general, imperial favourite, avid tourist**

Germanicus (c15 BC–AD 19) was the golden boy of the Roman imperial family. His father was Nero Claudius Drusus, brother of Tiberius and younger son of Livia, wife of Augustus, by her first marriage. His mother was Antonia Minor, daughter of Augustus's sister Octavia and Mark Antony; and **his wife was Agrippina, Augustus's granddaughter**. With this impressive lineage, Germanicus was tipped for the top: it seems that **Augustus hoped Germanicus would one day be emperor**.

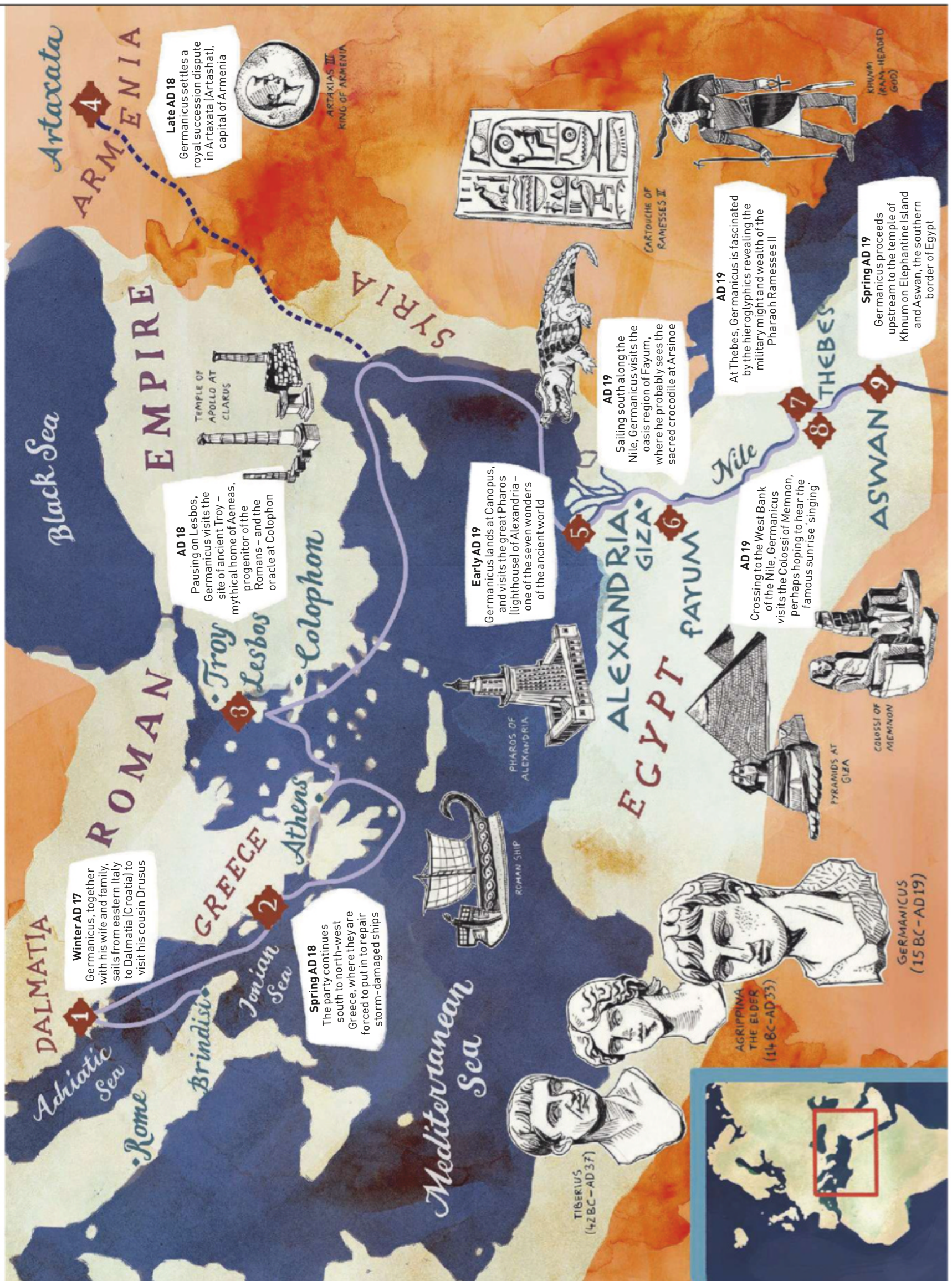
He fought wars in Illyricum (a province in the Balkans) and Germany, **crushing a Roman army mutiny on the Rhine**, and in AD 12 **participated in Tiberius's triumph in Rome**. In AD 15, he added to his fame by recovering two of the three eagles (legion standards) that had been lost when three Roman legions were wiped out by German tribes in the Teutoburg Forest in AD 9.

His appointment to supreme command in the eastern provinces – the reason for his journey in AD 17 – was his greatest honour, giving him **power over all Roman governors and military commanders** in the region. His ignominious death in Syria in AD 19 was followed by an outpouring of grief: monuments and honours to him were voted in communities across the empire. "Give us back Germanicus!" shouted the Roman mob after his death – to Tiberius's chagrin.

Though Germanicus did not live to become emperor, others in his family did. **His son, Caligula, took the imperial throne** in AD 37, and his brother Claudius followed after Caligula was murdered in AD 41; Germanicus's **grandson Nero was the next and final emperor** of the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

**The Mediterranean was a super-highway that made it possible for the Roman empire to exist – but it was still extremely dangerous**







## At Arsinoe, a pampered crocodile was kept in the lake, fed by the priests of the cult with meat and a honey cake

and Remus and thus progenitor of the Roman people.

In antiquity, a visit to the home of an oracle was a popular element of a journey. So Germanicus sailed south down the Ionian coast to the city of Colophon, to hear what the oracle of Clarian Apollo had to say. The news was typically ambiguous and impenetrable: Germanicus would, the oracle pronounced, make “an exit at the appropriate time” – in other words, he would die when it was the right time to do so.

Germanicus's primary ostensible objective on this journey was to organise and resolve diplomatic problems in Rome's eastern provinces. He encountered obstacles, notably in the form of a senator called Piso, who had been appointed as governor of Syria.

Though Germanicus rescued Piso after his fleet was wrecked in a storm off Rhodes en route to his new post, the latter continued to stir up trouble. Germanicus did, however, achieve success in resolving a succession dispute in Armenia, though it occupied the rest of that year, which he spent largely in the Armenian capital Artaxata (now Artashat, about 15 miles south of the modern capital, Yerevan).

### Exploring Egypt

In January AD 19, Germanicus – escaping the ugly politics of Roman government in the east – set out on a passage to Egypt, apparently without Agrippina. Strictly speaking, he was acting illegally by going at all: Augustus had prohibited Romans of senatorial status from entering Egypt, hoping to prevent them from using the province's wealth to blackmail Rome or mount a bid to become emperor. Germanicus's intention, though, was – like so many travellers before and since – “to become acquainted with antiquity”. Determined to enjoy himself, he spent much of his time without an armed escort, dressing in Greek garb that would have been familiar to a people ruled for some three

centuries by the Macedonian-Greek Ptolemaic dynasty.

Though few details of his itinerary survive, we can get an idea of his experiences thanks to an earlier account of a similar Roman tour. In 112 BC, in the days of the late Republic, a Roman senator called Lucius Memmius visited Egypt – then still independent and ruled by Ptolemy IX, Cleopatra's grandfather. A papyrus planning his itinerary survived, suggesting how Germanicus's journey might have progressed.

We do know that Germanicus landed in Canopus, a town founded (according to legend) by the Spartan king Menelaus on his way home from the Trojan War, and named after his helmsman. He addressed the townsfolk, telling them how sad he was to be away from his extended family, and recounting the difficulties of the journey.

He then travelled about 15 miles south-west to Alexandria, established by Alexander the Great after his conquest of Egypt in 332 BC. There he visited the famous 110-metre-high Pharos (lighthouse), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, which was by then well over 250 years old. He also gained popularity by opening state granaries and reducing the cost of grain.

If Germanicus followed in Memmius's footsteps – and he almost certainly did – he then journeyed to the Fayum, an oasis region in a depression in the Western Desert about 100 miles south-west of Cairo. His route would have involved sailing south through the Nile delta and up the Nile, past the pyramids

at Giza, before delving into the desert to reach the Fayum.

The ‘sights’ that Germanicus, like Memmius before him, would have wanted to see there included the cult of the crocodile god Sobek, known in Greek as Souchos, in the city of Arsinoe (called Krokodilópolis, ‘City of the Crocodile’, in Greek). Here a pampered crocodile was kept in the lake, fed by the priests of the cult with meat and a honey cake; on his visit, Memmius – treated as an honoured guest – was provided with titbits to feed to the spoiled crocodile.

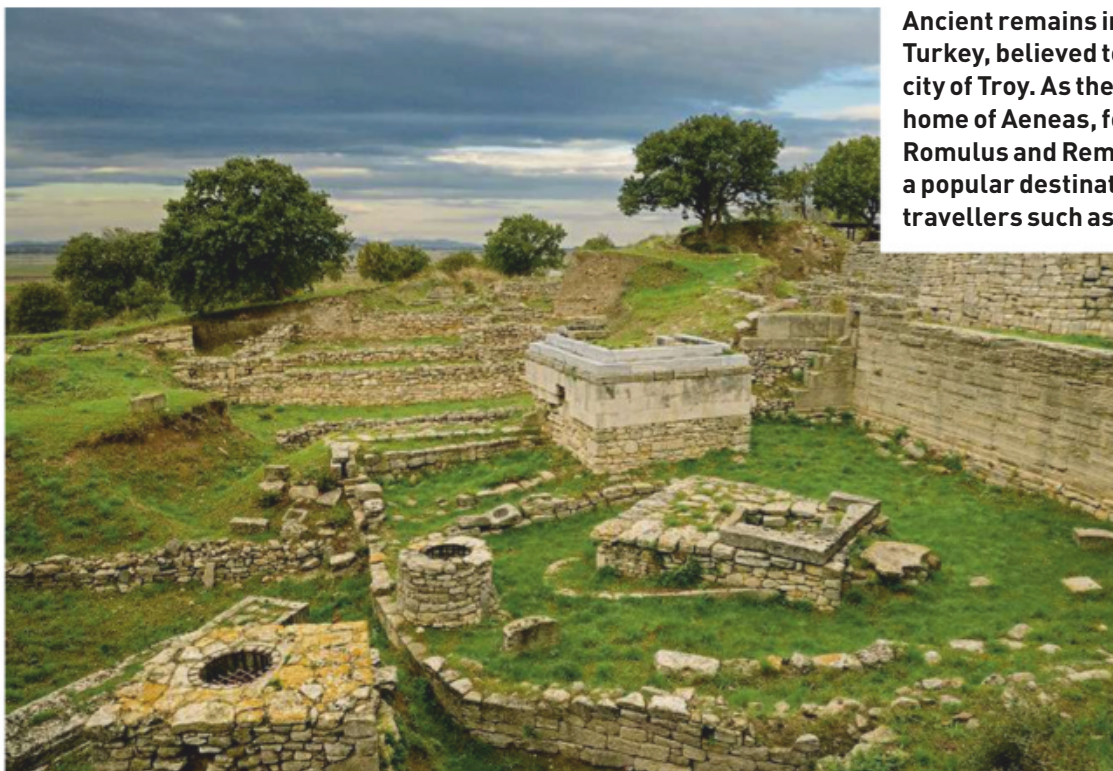
Not far away was the astonishing Labyrinth, the mortuary temple of Amenemhet III (ruled c1860–c1814 BC) near that pharaoh's pyramid at Hawara, celebrated for its vast number of chambers and passages; it was so tortuous that it could be visited only with a guide. And a little to the north-west, Germanicus visited Lake Moeris, a natural hollow fed by a partially artificial canal that allowed the Egyptians to control the annual Nile flood.

Germanicus certainly continued his journey upstream along the Nile to Thebes (now Luxor); we can date his visit with some accuracy, thanks to a surviving receipt of 25 January 19, recording the payment required by an Egyptian called Phatres for some of the Roman's wheat.

In Thebes, Germanicus was fascinated by the hieroglyphs inscribed on temple walls, which he had translated by a priest. He learned that “once the city contained 700,000 men of military age, and with that army King Ramesses [II, r 1279–1213 BC], after conquering Libya and Ethiopia, the Medes and the Persians, the Bactrian and the Scyth, and the lands where the Syrians and Armenians and neighbouring Cappadocians dwell, had ruled over all that lies between the Bithynian Sea on the one hand and the Lycian on the other.”

According to Tacitus, “the tribute-lists of the subject nations were still legible: the weight of silver and gold,





Ancient remains in north-west Turkey, believed to be the famed city of Troy. As the legendary home of Aeneas, forebear of Romulus and Remus, Troy was a popular destination for Roman travellers such as Germanicus

Lake Qarun, in the Fayum depression. Known in ancient times as Moeris, when Germanicus visited Egypt it was many metres higher, fed by the Nile via an artificial canal probably dug centuries earlier



Vast columns in the Great Hypostyle Hall at the Temple of Karnak in Thebes (now Luxor). Germanicus was fascinated by the hieroglyphics inscribed on walls and columns in the temples of Thebes

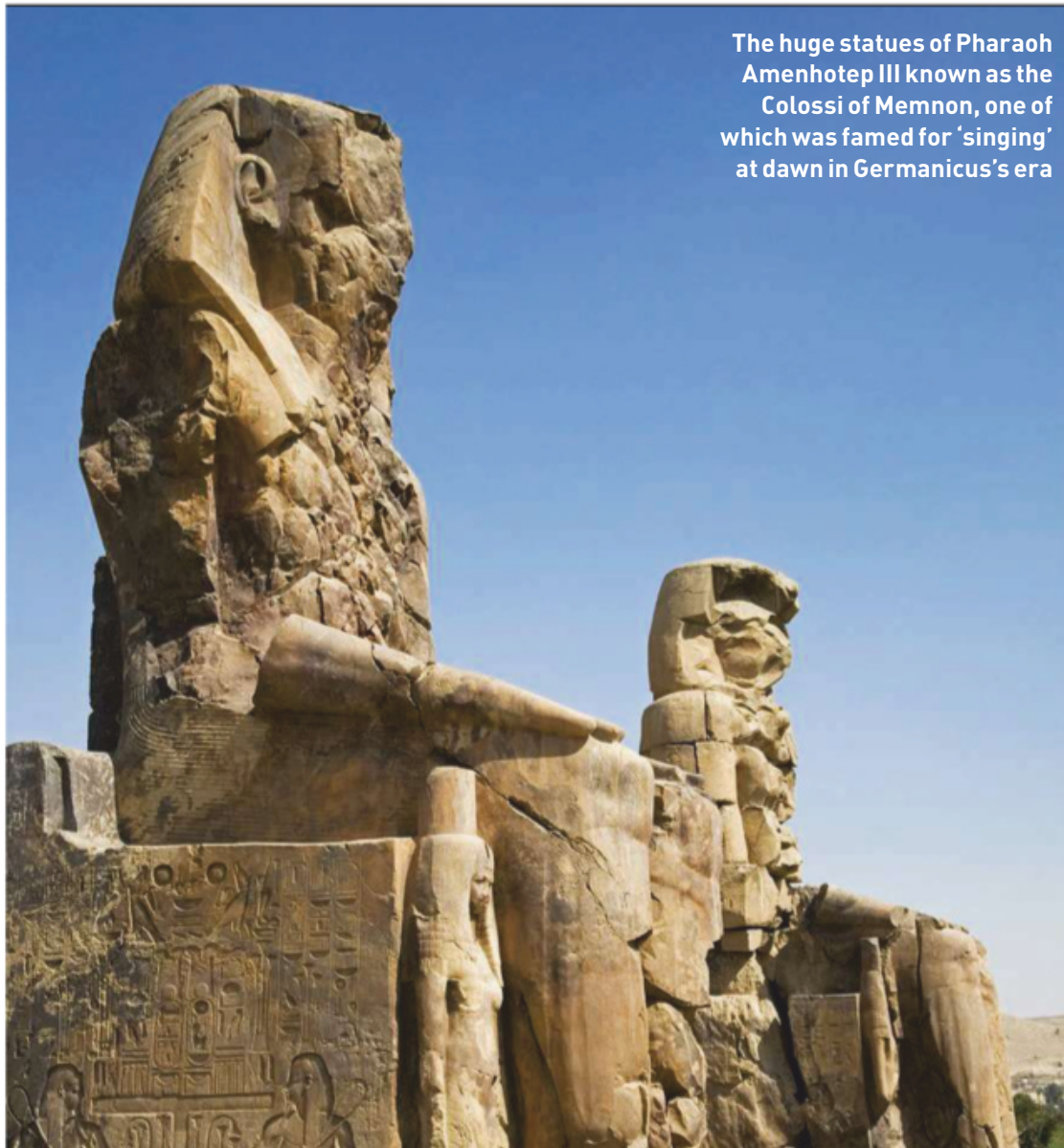


The Sphinx guards the pyramid of Khafre at Giza, south-west of Cairo. In early AD 19, Germanicus sailed up the Nile past the huge tombs at Giza which, in common with other ancient Egyptian necropoli, were built on the river's west bank; the homes of the living were always on the east bank



ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK/DEAMSTIME





The huge statues of Pharaoh Amenhotep III known as the Colossi of Memnon, one of which was famed for 'singing' at dawn in Germanicus's era

## Perhaps Germanicus, observing the faded glory of Egypt in Thebes, wondered what would happen to Rome one day

struction work ordered by Emperor Septimius Severus in AD 199, the Memnon no longer croons its eerie song.

Germanicus surely toured the ruins of the mortuary temples of Ramesses II and Ramesses III, some of the Tombs of the Nobles and others in the Valley of the Kings; certainly, surviving Graeco-Roman graffiti prove that visitors of his time explored the underground corridors and chambers in tombs that were still open in those days. We do know that Germanicus headed upstream all the way to Elephantine Island, home of the ram-headed god Khnum, guardian of the source of the Nile, and visited the nearby town of Aswan, on the southern border of Egypt.

Germanicus left Egypt some time in the spring of AD 19 to return to Syria, where his feud with Piso continued. He died there on 10 October, after falling seriously ill (allegedly poisoned by Piso), and his ashes were carried back to Rome to be interred in the Mausoleum of Augustus. His was a bright future that had been cut short – but before he died, he had at least witnessed some of the greatest wonders of the ancient world. 🌐



**Guy de la Bédoyère**

is a historian and author specialising in the Roman world. His latest book is *Domina: The Women Who Made Imperial Rome* (Yale, 2018)

AWL IMAGES

the number of weapons and horses, the temple-gifts of ivory and spices, together with the quantities of grain and other necessities... revenues no less imposing than those which are now exacted by the might of Parthia or by Roman power." Perhaps Germanicus, observing the faded glory of Egypt, wondered what would happen to Rome one day.

### Song of stone

Next, Germanicus crossed the Nile to the West Bank, to see the Colossi of Memnon – two vast statues of Amenhotep III (ruled c1386–1349 BC) of the 18th Dynasty, carved from quartzite sandstone. These monuments, representing almost all that remains of the vast mud-brick mortuary temple of the pharaoh, are still among the great sights of Egypt, and look today much as they did when Germanicus admired them. One of the statues was famed for 'singing' at sunrise – a phenomenon described by Greek geographer Strabo (c64

BC–c24 AD) as "a slight blow", probably caused when the rising sun heated dew within a crack, creating a whistling or groaning noise as it evaporated.

The spectacle was described by another Roman visitor, Julia Balbilla, a poet who experienced it while visiting as part of the retinue of the emperor Hadrian in AD 130. The four epigrams she inscribed in Greek on one of the statues to commemorate her visit can still be seen. They begin:

*"Memnon the Egyptian I learned,  
when warmed by the rays of the sun,  
speaks from Theban stone.  
When he saw Hadrian, the king of all,  
before rays of the sun, he greeted him  
– as far as he was able."*

Another Roman, possibly visiting later that century, carved into one of its feet the memorable comment: *Camilius, hora prima semis audivi Memnonii* – "At half past the first hour [of the day] I, Camilius, heard the Memnon."

Sadly, possibly as a result of recon-



# BBC World Histories

ON SALE 23 MAY

## D-Day

How the world reacted to the Normandy landings



## Manga through the ages

As a major new exhibition launches at London's British Museum, we explore the long history of a Japanese art form that has become an international phenomenon



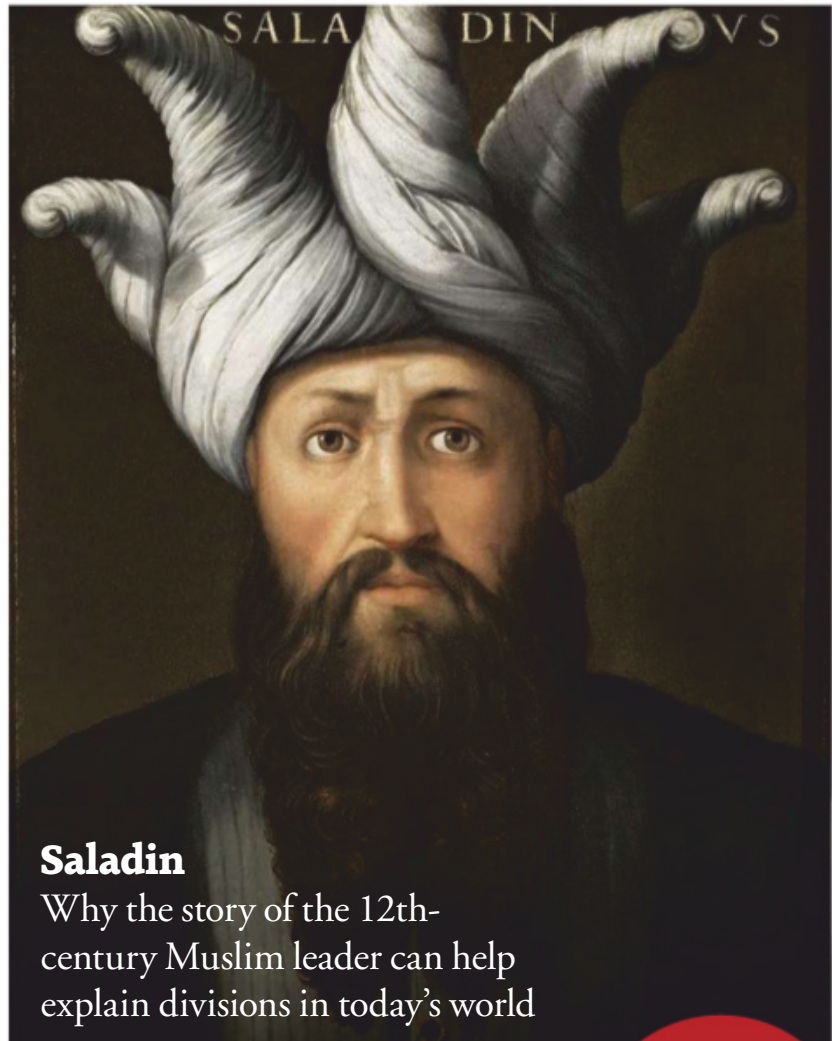
## The Stonewall Riots

The real story of how clashes at a bar in New York forever changed global LGBTQ rights



## A history of hair

Historian Emma Dabiri discusses her new history of black people's hair, from precolonial Africa to the Black Power era



## Saladin

Why the story of the 12th-century Muslim leader can help explain divisions in today's world

FRAN MONKS/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN/ALAMY/BRITISH MUSEUM

Never miss an issue – **subscribe** today at [buysubscriptions.com/WHIP15](https://buysubscriptions.com/WHIP15)

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY**

➔ PAGE 24



# Morocco's spiritual capital

The soul of the Maghreb lingers in the medieval walled city of the former imperial capital.

**Paul Bloomfield**

roams the labyrinthine byways of Fès



**Paul Bloomfield**  
is a travel and  
heritage writer

The beautiful courtyard of the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and university, founded in the 850s

It's a story that's all too familiar: Muslims, suffering the brutal aftermath of rebellion, flee around and across the Mediterranean to seek a new life. Such is the tale of Fès's early years, and here these refugees provided the bedrock of Islamic learning, architecture, commerce and community.

To see how these factions slotted together, climb to a viewpoint north of the medina (walled city) at dusk, as the muezzins' calls drift from hundreds of mosques. From among the Merenid tombs scattered like broken teeth across the hillside, gaze into the valley to Fès el-Bali, the oldest part of the city.

The village of Medinat Fès was founded here by Moulay Idriss, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and founder of the Arab state of Morocco, shortly after his arrival in c787, having fled the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad. But it was his son, succeeding as Sultan Idriss II in c807, who developed Fès as his capital and the country's spiritual heart.

And in the heart of his city Idriss II lies today, under the pyramidal roof of his *zaouïa* (tomb shrine institution). It's closed to non-Muslims, but wander past its heavy wooden doors and you may

glimpse the tiled courtyard and shrine. Idriss II forged the character of the city through two acts of Islamic hospitality. First, around 817, he welcomed hundreds of Andalucian families escaping repressive Umayyad rule in Córdoba; they settled on the east bank of the Oued (river) Fès, forming al-Andalous (the Andalucian quarter). Then, seven years later, he allotted land on the west bank to refugees fleeing persecution in Kairouan (now in Tunisia) – the al-Qarawiyyin district.

Wealthy and pious, in 857 the latter group built the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and, two years later, its university – reputedly the world's oldest continuously operating place of higher education. Both are off-limits to non-Muslims, as are most *medersas* (Islamic colleges) scattered around the medina; an exception is the Medersa Bou Inania, founded in 1351, which boasts glorious Moorish *zellij* tilework, sculpted wood and alabaster to rival Granada's Alhambra.

As the Fassi saying goes, all roads lead to the al-Qarawiyyin. A web of alleys spiders in all directions, lined with carved wooden doorways set into blank walls. Behind lie family houses; expensive and difficult to maintain in this congested warren, many have been abandoned



and left to decay. A number are being renovated, many refashioned as boutique hotels generally called *riads* (strictly, a house with an internal garden is a riad; one with a central courtyard is a *dar*).

Almost entirely car-free, the medina's reputed 9,400 alleyways are thronged with donkeys – listen for the warning shouts of “*Barak!*” from their drivers – and studded with *funduqs* (caravanserais) and *souks* (bazaars) where *jellaba* (robe)-clad shoppers barter for textiles, silverware, food, perfumes and spices.

East of the al-Qarawiyyin, the scent of herbs and spices is punctured by the reek of cowhide, pigeon guano and urine from the Chaouwara tanneries. Enter a leather shop overlooking the rainbow-hued vats, hold the proffered sprig of mint to your nose, and you'll witness a process unchanged for centuries. The tanneries can be overwhelming, as can the whole medina; American author Paul Bowles wrote: “Fès is full of flies and dust... It is quite dirty and very beautiful.”

To escape the melee, head west to the blue-tiled Moorish gate Bab Boujeloud, the western limit of Fès el-Bali. To the

## Listen for warning shouts of “*Barak!*” from donkey drivers in the medina's 9,400 narrow alleyways

south-west spreads Fès el-Jdid, the ‘new’ city, established by Merenid conquerors in the 13th century. Smaller and more ordered, it encompasses the royal palace and the Mellah (Jewish quarter), now home to just a handful of Jews, most having emigrated after Moroccan independence in 1956.

Beyond lies the Ville Nouvelle, developed from 1916 by the French, who moved the administrative capital to Rabat. After that the old city began to decay; a Unesco World Heritage site since 1981, it is being patchily restored. Yet within its crumbling walls, Fès medina remains the most mesmerising and extensive medieval city in the Islamic world. 🌐

### FÈS IN EIGHT SITES

#### Bab Boujeloud

‘Blue Gate’ built by the French in 1913 to replace the medieval city portal

#### Nejjarine Museum of Wooden Arts & Crafts

Housed in the wonderful restored Nejjarine Funduq (caravanserai)

#### Chaouwara Tanneries

Kaleidoscopic dyeing vats tinted with poppy seeds, indigo and saffron

#### Medersa Bou Inania

Islamic college founded in 1351, with spectacular *zellij* tilework and alabaster

#### Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque & University

Important mosque and adjacent university founded in the 850s

#### Souk al-Henna

One of the medina's oldest bazaars, by a 13th-century former psychiatric hospital

#### Musee Dar Batha

Palatial 19th-century Hispano-Moorish house with displays of Fassi ceramics

#### Ibn Danan Synagogue

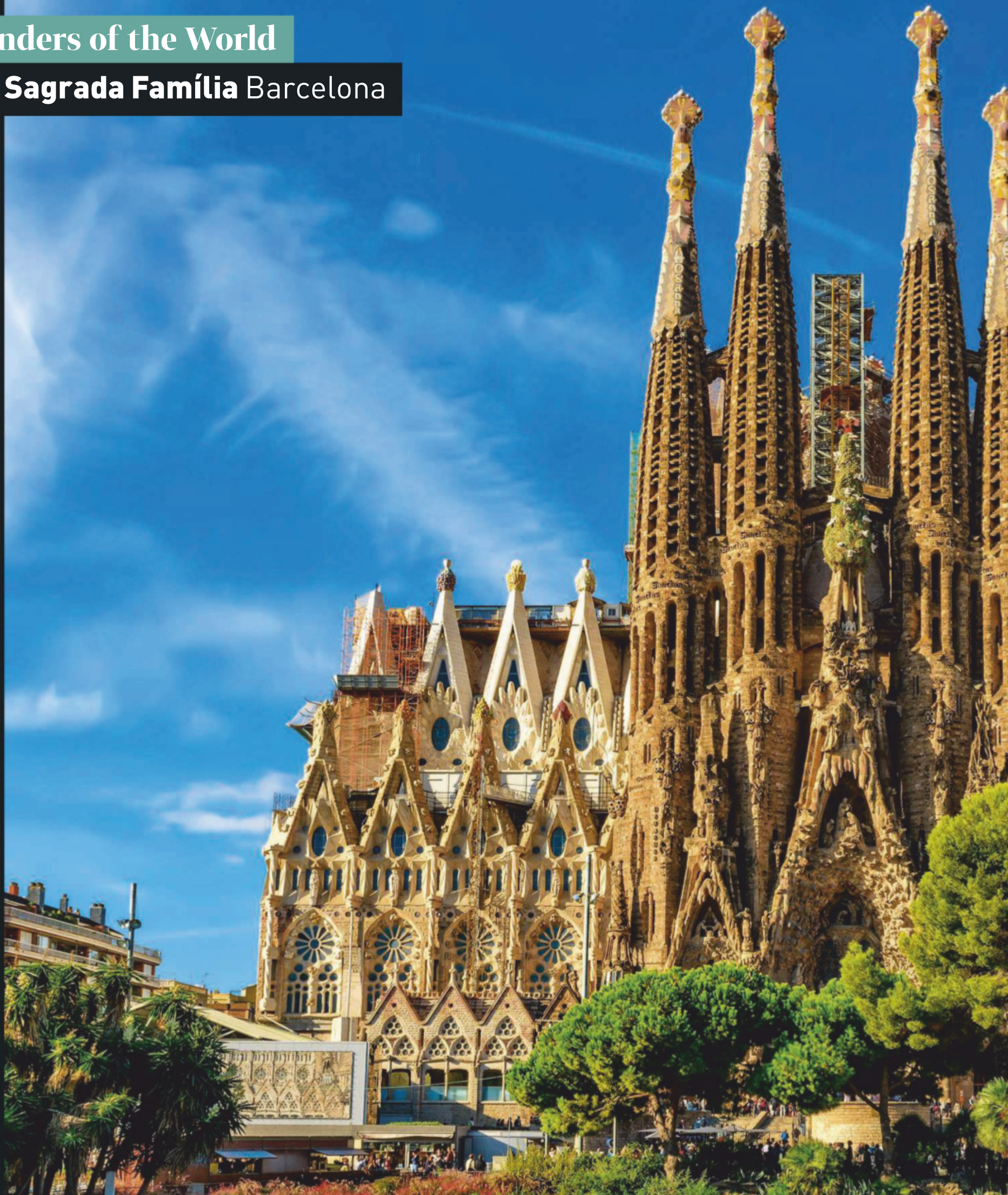
17th-century synagogue in the Mellah (Jewish quarter) that still holds centuries-old gazelle-skin Torah scrolls





## Wonders of the World

### **Sagrada Família** Barcelona







## 🕒 Higher purpose

The spires of the Expiatory Temple of the Holy Family seem to sprout from the streets of Barcelona. The origins of the Sagrada Família, as it is usually known, date to 1866, when a bookseller, Josep Maria Bocabella i Verdaguer, founded a spiritual association to campaign for a new church. The first stone was laid in 1882 and a year later, after original architect Francisco de Paula del Villar y Lozano stepped down, Antoni Gaudí took over the project. Eschewing the neo-Gothic style of his predecessor, the innovative Catalan architect created a monumental design for a new kind of church that, though still under construction over 135 years later, now attracts more than four million visitors each year.



# Barcelona's celestial basilica

Above the Catalan capital soars a forest of slender stems – the spires of the Sagrada Família.

**Paul Bloomfield** visits Gaudí's soon-to-be-completed masterpiece →

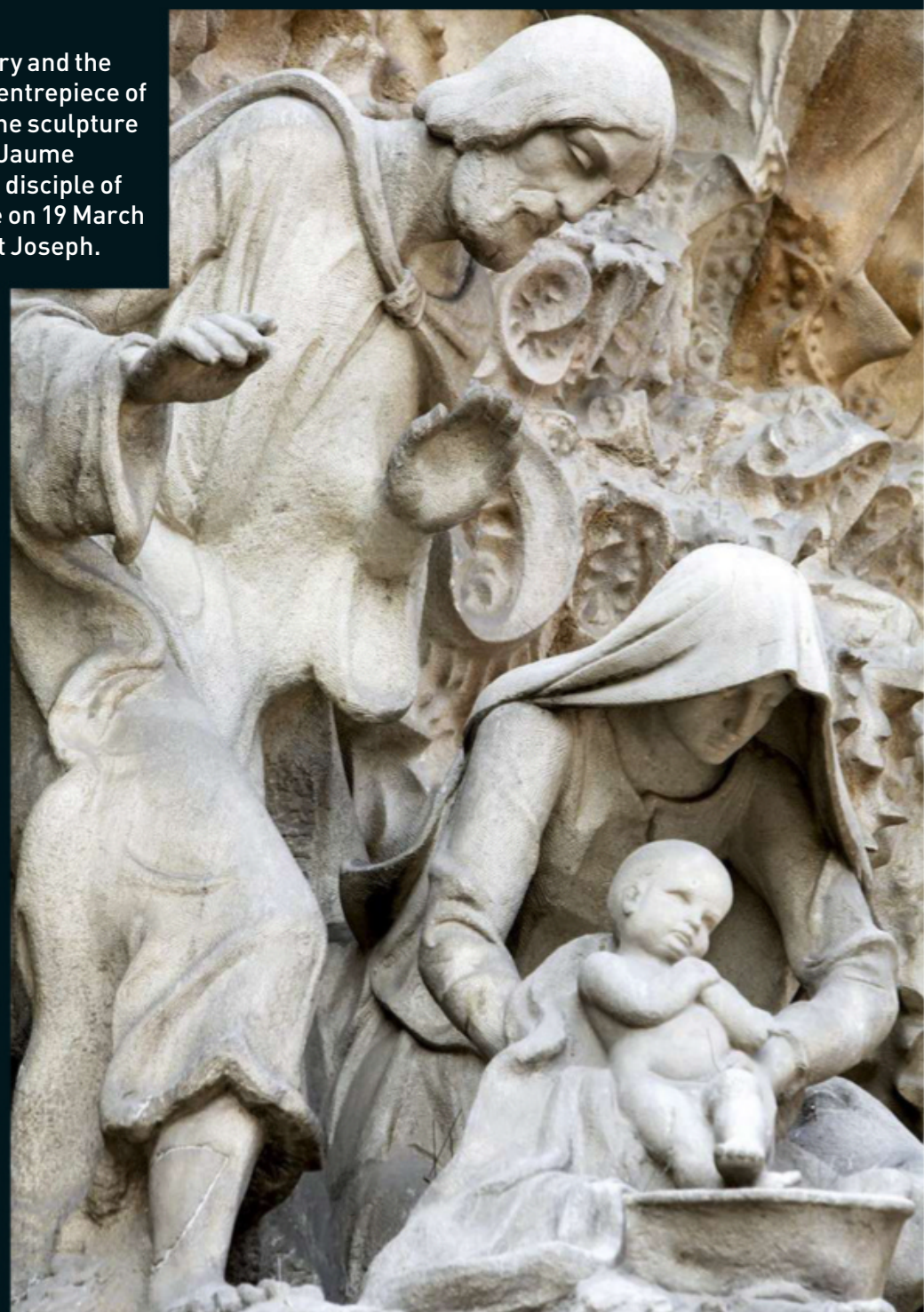


### ➡ Holy love

Statues of Joseph, Mary and the baby Jesus form the centrepiece of the Nativity Facade. The sculpture group was created by Jaume Busquets (1903–68), a disciple of Gaudí, and set in place on 19 March 1958, the feast of Saint Joseph.

### ⌚ The angels' share

The bell towers of the Sagrada Família are ornately decorated right to the top. Asked why he designed details for high towers where people couldn't make them out clearly, Gaudí replied: "The angels will see them". His plans included 18 great towers, representing the 12 apostles, four evangelists, the Virgin Mary and Christ himself – the tallest central spire, which will top 172 metres.



### ⌚ Start of the story

The religious figures populating the Nativity Facade, begun in 1892, are surrounded by tendrils, branches and leaves, an organic style of decoration that distinguished Gaudí's work. Indeed, he explained that: "I capture the purest and most pleasurable images from nature, the nature that is always my teacher". His ideas reflected the ethos of the Modernista school of design that sprang from the *Renaixença* (Catalan cultural Renaissance) from the 1830s.



GETTY IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK





### 🕒 Master at rest

Gaudí's tomb is the focal point of the Chapel of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in the crypt. By 1923, Gaudí had produced the final designs for the naves and roofs – 40 years after he had started work on the project – but three years later, on 7 June 1926, he was hit by a tram, and died three days later.

### 🕒 Passion project

Though Gaudí produced drawings for the Passion Facade, work hadn't begun before his death, and in July 1936 – at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War – anarchists destroyed his drawings, plans and models. Work on that facade began in 1954, and in 1986 Catalan sculptor Josep Maria Subirachs was commissioned to create statues for the facade, producing some 100 sculptures in his distinctively angular style. The facade was completed in 2018.



### 🕒 Heavens above

The ceiling of the Sagrada Família resembles a star-spangled sky glimpsed through a forest canopy, sparking a sense of wonder and a journey to spiritual truth that Gaudí aimed to inspire. The basilica was consecrated by Pope Benedict XVI in November 2010, and construction is scheduled for completion in 2026, a century after the death of its visionary architect, Antoni Gaudí. 🌐

**Paul Bloomfield** is a travel and heritage writer and photographer, co-author of *Lonely Planet's Where to Go When* (Lonely Planet, 2016)





***“The troops firing look European – which raises important questions about the massacre and its place in Indian politics”***

***The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre***

*Created by:* Unknown artist, 20th century

*Now at:* Central Sikh Museum, Amritsar, India

*Chosen by:* **Zareer Masani**

**In the centre of Amritsar, northern India, is a small museum.** Among portraits of various Indian nationalist luminaries is a large painting behind glass, which the museum's keeper proudly displayed to me when I visited. It depicts a massacre, with troops shown mowing down a crowd with bullets, and victims strewn across what looks like a battlefield.

The platform from which the soldiers shot is just alongside the museum. It was on this spot a century ago, on 13 April 1919, that British Indian Army troops fired at a crowd of many thousands gathered in the Jallianwala Bagh gardens.

**Today, it's hard to believe that this is the place depicted in the painting.** The ornamental gardens are thronged with cheerful families taking selfies alongside bullet holes obligingly highlighted in the surrounding walls. In the painting there are no walls, no sense of an enclosed space. Yet the fact that the gardens are enclosed was a major factor in the fatalities: there were only three narrow exits from the Bagh, through which a crowd estimated at between 5,000 and 30,000 tried to flee.

**Another striking feature of the painting** is that, though the dead are clearly dark-skinned Indians, the troops firing at them look unmistakably European. This raises important questions about the massacre and its place in Indian politics. In fact, rather than being solely European, the 50-strong firing squad comprised mostly Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Pathan and Baluch Muslims, who fired obediently on their own countrymen.

The officer commanding them, Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer, was certainly European. Yet his face has been erased from the painting – the act of an

over-enthusiastic nationalist before the protective glass was installed.

**The painting doesn't adequately convey the fact that the firing squad was tiny** compared with the crowd it confronted. General Dyer later advanced these numerical odds as a reason for opening fire with no warning within 30 seconds of entering the Bagh, and for continuing to fire for perhaps up to 10 minutes until the entire crowd had either fled or fallen.


The anonymity of the commanding officer leaves us with no clue to his character, which has to be gleaned from other sources. What's revealed is a complex individual, racked with insecurities. Dyer was second-generation Indian-born and bred, fluent in Hindustani and popular with his troops, but also a bit of a loner, with a chip on his shoulder among his more aristocratic British colleagues.

**Dyer's actions made him a hero to some,** not only Anglo-Indians – who hailed him as “the saviour of the Punjab” – but also to many conservative Indians alarmed by the spiralling public disorder on which he cracked down.

Amritsar also witnessed the extraordinary spectacle – not portrayed in this museum or anywhere else – of Dyer being felicitated by the priests of the Sikh Golden Temple, an event that took place just a few days after the massacre. The priests even proclaimed him an honorary Sikh, though he refused to grow his hair, wear a turban or give up smoking. In history as in this painting, what has been omitted from the story is as important and fascinating as what it actually portrays. 🌐

**Zareer Masani** is a historian, author and broadcaster

**DISCOVER MORE**

 Listen to Zareer Masani's documentary **Amritsar 1919: Remembering a British Massacre** on 10 April on BBC Radio 4, or online at [bbc.co.uk/radio4](http://bbc.co.uk/radio4)

AKG IMAGES





